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CYCLES OF PERSONAL BELIEF

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CYCLES OF PERSONAL BELIEF

BY

WALDO EMERSON FORBES

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1917

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FOREWORD

A FRESH wind blows out of the dawn. In infancy the world itself is a paradise. But when afterwards we look back upon the auroral splendor of early childhood, we wonder how far to credit our memory. In the freshness of morning that radiance reappears now and then. The early light recalls to the heart the condition of original purity from which our consciousness has sprung. The course of the spring is full of fragrance and music, from the time when the crocuses bloom, and the bluebirds begin singing, till the sea-wind comes across the hay-fields gathering the scent of the first opening wild roses. The earth is stored with recollections, but there dwells in these an alien sweetness. Natural objects which gave us our first impressions must have reflected the light of some celestial sphere, as occasionally upon smooth surfaces we see with surprise a far-off view superimposed upon the outline of the surface itself.

Within the enchantment of childhood's happiness the heart rested in complete confidence. It was a condition of peace which left no trace of death or evil within the horizon, and if the soul could find itself therein once more, its questionings and wanderings would cease. But even with

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the evanescence of its augury, even with all its rarity, the dream feeling which clings to the earliest memories of life is but a hint of what the heart would claim as its natural birthright.

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CYCLES OF PERSONAL BELIEF

PART I

ILLUSION

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CYCLES OF PERSONAL BELIEF

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

PHILOSOPHY is the yearning for vision, the effort of the soul toward light. But in the quest to which these cravings give rise there are endless perplexities. The definitions themselves are wayward and illusive as if instinct with a mischievous spirit of life. The study of truth is not merely a matter of map-making. Especially in logic and metaphysics, the surveying process wearies us. We compile a cold system of diagrams, while living thought is ringing in the world outside. Life has a terrible inevitable forward movement. It goes whether we manage to name it or not; and the life of thought moves with the rest. The writer cannot afford to crowd truth into barren formulas. It can never be understood by analysis. Moreover, the corpses of thought are apt to be repulsive. However valuable the results of mental anatomical study may be, they are trivial beside the living truth. It is better to live among crude sensations than to study a lifeless philosophy. The vision of ideas banishes the thought of definitions.

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All the genius, all the knowledge, all the art in the world has but sketched fragments of the mighty portrait of truth. However clear certain outlines may stand forth, they are but partial, giving a hint of something beyond; and all formulas and definitions are less than the idea they seek to express.

For this reason I am not attempting in the following chapters to outline a systematic philosophy, but rather to sketch in simple terms certain significant aspects in the development of human thought, and to make a confession of faith which shall as nearly as possible conform to the demands of my own reason.

BELIEF

Man wakes from the sleep of infancy into a condition of belief, and presently, finding a great many transformations going on in and around himself, he finds an imperative need of investigating the beliefs which have formed the specific components of the believing state of mind. This spirit of investigation is nothing else than the thirst for truth. All the substance or potency which a belief can have must be given to it by its truth, so that a false belief has lost its savor as soon as we are really convinced that it is false.

Now belief is a sort of matrix from which our activities arise. It is the substance of the child's happy confidence in his first impressions. It is this which gives the world its seeming stability.

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Instinctively man believes in the reality of the immediate facts and forms with which he is dealing, and perhaps he clings the more tenaciously to this habit the less ground he has for doing so. A child wonders continually. He is half prepared to see the world dissolve, but a man who has already seen much of it dissolve, doggedly sticks to what he has left. However dreamlike and illusory phenomena may prove, the solid substance of the world before us, here and now, is real, and in its reality we believe.

Youth is the period of belief, and as the hopes and infatuations of youth interest us most, so it is the fresh, untamed innocence and force of their illusions which give primitive peoples so much charm. But as we look upon these believers acting out their lives in good faith, as we perceive that in most cases the strength of a man's belief measures the extent of his activity, we may well pause in wonder at the potency of belief as such. It is strange to see a man fervently acting his part in the world, while his scientific neighbor sees at a glance how insubstantial are his realities, how complete his delusion; as if a child looked upon the painted scenery of the stage and thought to climb its trees or smell its roses. Crude superstitions or specious tenets alike command us. I suppose Machiavelli believed in the efficiency, wisdom, and even right of his doctrines. Do not even the German people believe whatever the Kaiser and his ministers tell them? History abounds with

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wars carried on in behalf of cults and doctrines which soon proved themselves wrong.

It is not easy to understand the rights and powers of belief. Santa Claus retreated early from our lives. We assume, perhaps, that when the child discovers the parents by the chimney late at night the fiction evaporates into nothing. But have we really solved the problem of the elfish power over the child's imagination? Somehow a spirit dwelt in the chimney in those first Christmas mornings. You may call him subjective if you like, but to what avail? Thereby the mystery only becomes the greater, for how could a child's mind create such a being? The grown-ups were but unwitting agents, for they understand no longer the quality of that influence and personality. It is the child who gives or discovers in Santa Claus his character and actuality.

If an atheist maintains that there is no God, so long as a man is religious it will have no more effect upon him than if some one tells us, when we are warming our hands at a good fire, that there is no such thing as fire, or, when we are made happy by a kindness, that there is no such thing as kindness. Thus in every belief, whether it appears to be rooted in nature, or only in itself, we are dealing with an actuality.

Europe bears the weight of countless churches, a testimony to this, for why, in a world so strictly governed by biological and economic laws, why, in the struggle for existence, did the impoverished

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Catholic communities spend their substance upon such unproductive work as building vast cathedrals? Some people like to account for the religious impulse by explaining that it is good for people to believe in a God whether there is one or not. A clear-headed child would repudiate this, would instinctively rebel against the flippancy which supposes God a figment of the imagination, created by man for the sake of the glow of belief.

Neither religious belief, nor any constructive state of mind has such shallow foundations, nor can they be fostered by any such folly. Wherever belief has vitality there is a tap-root sucking at truth itself; and however much our beliefs are mixed up with follies, errors, and confusions, they derive nourishment from reality. And if the belief seems to have no real foundation whatever, we must still be careful not to dismiss it hastily, for like an air plant it may subsist upon an invisible but real aliment. We may well be cautious in challenging the springs of action of persons whom we do not understand. There is no more occasion to quarrel with the great extent of religious forms and usages than with the expanses of lichens, mosses, and grass which cover the earth.

Thought, however, can never rest contented with belief alone. We are continually striving to pass that borderland between belief and knowledge where most of our intellectual life is spent. The thirst for truth can never be satisfied while error of any sort is suspected. The quest carries

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us far beyond the pleasant havens of faith. Doubt and criticism attack everything. They must at least have a hearing. If to winnow out the illusory element of facts appears a superhuman task, if almost all our results remain within the realm of greater or less probability, if the positive principles of life are at best but dimly appreciated, still we cherish the knowledge of a simple, heavenly light which leads us toward divine and absolute truth.

THE WORLD

The first product of belief is the world; that is, the world as we perceive it. This would seem to arise naturally enough from our first impressions, and our interpretations of them. We believe in a consistent whole, and at first we do not trouble ourselves with the question of how much our impressions are necessitated from without, and how far they are colored or modified from within. Yet how strangely compounded is even the familiar ground of everyday civilized life. Education and culture soon teach us that much of our established views upon the nature of the world are of comparatively recent date. An intelligent child while growing up absorbs without knowing it the Copernican astronomy, the atomic theory, the theory of the conservation of energy, the law of gravity, the law of evolution, as well as countless earlier explanations which rendered the world more intelligible. It is an intricate study to ascertain the origin of our beliefs — to show, besides our debt

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to European civilized thought, what we owe to the Greeks, what to the Hebrews, and what to the Norsemen. How the world would appear were these and similar elements in our belief eliminated we could not tell; but the simpler states of mind can be partly recalled from childish experiences.

The world at first sight appears to be a fixed, unchanging reality, or rather a reality with certain definite methods of change constantly recurring. Our early simple point of view takes for granted the stability of facts. We do not expect to find mystery and magic. If there are fairies they are supernatural, or one might say, they are read between the lines, and there is nothing strange in this. They do not upset nature by their presence. If they are not expected, neither do they occasion surprise. That the world, the geologic world, produced us, is not a troublesome proposition. There is nature more substantial than we. We die; it does not. We are subject to its agencies, while it, except to a trifling extent is uninfluenced by ourselves. Our sensations are caused by the elements external to ourselves. We are simply adapted to receive impressions from what is going on outside of us anyway, regardless of our perception of it.

In early life what innocent, irresponsible creatures we are, humble, unassuming dependencies upon the back of a more or less friendly round animal. What a joyous spirit reigns, where everything is possible, everything unquestioned. Nature is resonant and echoing, thronged with per-

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sonalities. The vestiges of mythology with hints of depth and beauty are with us still. Our own childish folklore and mythology tell us how it was with primitive peoples. It must come about naturally and inevitably that man imagines he detects the presence of unseen powers behind natural phenomena, and a conscious active will appears to direct some at least of the natural events. A stricter use of the intellect gradually dispels the mists which must at all times float in the minds of primitive people. Outlines thought to be supernatural and shifting simply because these mists envelop them, now partially, and again completely, appear at last, when the mists have cleared away, sharply defined, and continuous with the foreground. An explanation clear and explicit accounts for the behavior of a comet, for instance, and it is a portent no longer.

When the methods by which the processes of nature take place are understood, and it is suggested that tide, wind, cloud, and rain proceed mechanically, the belief in a conscious will in nature becomes correspondingly harder. The view, once hazy and changeable, relatively dream-like, fragmentary, subject to inconsequent and rapid shifting, becomes orderly and predictable. What need of a will or intelligence to explain the existence of the facts?

Presently, however, we realize that the clearness which has been introduced into nature, is the work of the mind; and then, with the realization

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of the power of the mind, comes the question, Since the mind has drawn the portrait, what else can there be besides the mind? Is nature in itself simply a blank sheet on which thought has sketched a world? With the emphasis laid thus on mind the thinking process tends to assert itself to an extreme, until one day the thinker wonders if he is alone in the universe, his surroundings, friends, family, and all, his own dream. There has never been any denial of this solipsism except by playing out the dream for what it is worth. If in this mood, the dreamer punches one of the dream figures on the nose, metaphysical speculation will have to be suspended, and the laws according to which these figures appear to act become more interesting than the estimate of the foundation upon which they rest.

Upon this and similar considerations rests the study of nature. The intellectual world to-day has largely reverted to the condition of believing in the absolute reality of an order external to the mind, of which the mind is the interpreter. The more tyrannous the mind, the more absolute its authority, the more it subdues phenomena, the less conscious it becomes of its own ascendancy. Keen thinkers like Huxley give us a vigorous realistic outline of the world, to a great extent ignoring how much this is the result of the power of their own assertive intellects. Then like all original thinkers they are followed by a host of bigots — scientific bigots who unlike their mas-

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ters have failed to perceive the restless infinity beating against the sea walls of form. Industriously they have attacked the world and undertaken its description down to the minutest detail. Indeed, observing with what thoroughness the accumulation of knowledge has been carried on we ask, Can or cannot there exist an encyclopædic description of the world? Do physics and chemistry embrace just so many known factors already catalogued, and so many unknown factors which will one day be tamed, photographed, and listed?

But attention alike to the interpreter and to the interpretation shows us how the nature of the world presents insoluble problems to the enquirer. The terms of space present the question of infinite extent and infinite divisibility. Astronomy is a science of what we can see, but all that it can tell us terminates at inevitable encircling limitations. Chemistry can tell us certain practical properties of matter, but of its ultimate constitution, nothing. Time allows us to understand the ways and means of forces up to a certain point; but time if we reflect upon it long unsettles our theories. Infinity permeates everything.

Reflection only deepens the need for reflection. With the intellect our only interpreter, how faithful has it been in its interpretation of this changing nature outside ourselves? Did the intellect construct the whole fabric of our beliefs? Is religion only a matter of personal dogma, and even

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the whole world a piece of architectural fiction; religion after all but a prescription to please the dramatic sense, science a more convenient though less entertaining set of dogmas, and life quite nameless and inexplicable, running its own course independent of the two? Is all belief a matter of dogmas taken up out of the nameless flowing essence of the soul, because we feared to trust ourselves unsupported on the waves?

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PART II

DISILLUSION

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CHAPTER II

DISILLUSION

Criticism, Analysis, Scepticism are the work of the Destroyer. The spirit of doubt withers the outward aspect of belief; but it penetrates, chills and transforms the inner nature of the man as well. For the growing boy, when the picture that once was charming has lost its charm, when the mysterious woodshed and cow-barn have been thoroughly explored and all the darkest corners penetrated, when he has climbed the highest hill in the familiar distant landscape, and still more, when for the first time his liking for a friend has cooled, the quality of his belief has changed, a certain innocence and freshness are lost. Doubt comes, like the east wind rifling the beauty of the orchard, as the petals of the apple blossoms fall, and scatters our childish confidence along with our specific beliefs.

But the Destroyer cannot by any possibility be eliminated or exorcised. He is here together with life, and he must be reckoned with. If the fact of implicit belief was once real, the fact of questioning that belief is real also. In the quest of truth the analytical process is inevitable.

Now there are many forms of scepticism, but the action of doubt is alike in the disintegration of any one belief or any group of beliefs. The

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typical and familiar example is the action of scientific investigation upon religious theory. Science is one thing, scepticism is another, but the sceptic tendency was the first effect of a new impulse toward the enquiry into truth. The main tendency of scientific thought at first induced a great wave of negation in a field where the positive state of mind had ruled before. Again scientific thought is one thing, the influence of science, or the layman's view of science, is another. The progress of thought proceeds at different rates in different individuals and different societies. Scientists also have taken a variety of stands upon fundamental questions. I suppose there are plenty of men to-day still clinging to a crude deterministic philosophy; while on the other hand, there are thinkers of the objective type, who yet have so far modified or abandoned their mechanistic conceptions as to be far beyond what might have been considered scientifically orthodox a few years ago. But after all there have always been idealists, there have always been materialists. It is only a question of who has the floor. We may take certain trends of opinion as typical of the age. We shall find, then, that the intellectual warfare through which the process of thought has swept us, left the layman in possession of a negative portrait of the world in place of earlier religious beliefs. In respect to these, this portrait typified the condition of disillusion. It was a portrait of a materialistic universe with-

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out spirit, a mechanism determined by exact, unalterable physical laws.

Strictly considered, this mechanism left no room for a conscious will which can actuate the motions of the earth and planets. We think and speak rather of the developments by gravity, by centrifugal force, by the principles which are associated with such expressions as the nebular hypothesis.

Our own world developed in the universal natural process which astronomy has fragmentarily portrayed. Enormous numbers of stars or suns, which by their distribution suggest, or at least do not preclude, the probability of an infinite number beyond our powers of observation, surround us, all evolving with a temporal history analogous to that of our own sun with its planets, comets, and asteroids. Our earth was thrown from the sun, cooled, and following immutable laws its surface geology brought about conditions favorable to the dawn of life. Life grew up by an inevitable process which it could not have done other than follow. A law of variation governed each change, each onward step. A law of inheritance governed the furtherance and preservation of all that was established and fit to survive. A bit of life pushes unconsciously this way, then another way, then a third, till it finds a way in which it can move and grow. This way becomes *the* way. It is the only way. Life experiments unconsciously. All life thus experimenting which hits

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upon a way that proves advantageous for the preservation of this life is more apt to be preserved, and that which experiments in less advantageous ways is less apt to be preserved. In the long run the more advantageous will supersede the less advantageous. This is how we came here; this also is how our forms of expression, our institutions, our thoughts even, developed. Any ethical doctrine which assumes us to be free agents, with a choice between right and wrong, is merely a story which evolved because it helped us while immature — even though false: for what possible value could a choice have — why talk about good and bad, or the virtue of sacrifice, or any other virtue, if every action, every thought, every so-called act of will is a product of the past?

Every form in the natural order, says this view, must be a product which cannot be other than what it is. The lifeless geologic elements produced at last life. The unconscious vegetative life produced at last a consciousness. Consciousness proved useful to life and came thus to be preserved. Yet still there was always an unknown term, namely, the motive force which actuated these lawful processes. Again life when it was produced proved to some extent incalculable. The germ, the spark, that which has evolved, that which will continue to evolve, has not been wholly appraised. For convenience it is called vital energy.

So much of the mechanism has been explained,

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so much of the organic law has been harmonized with inorganic law, that the body has come to seem almost machine-like to the understanding. Some of its component substances have been made in the chemical laboratory. It is all a subtle combination of known elements. The gulf, to be sure, between consciousness and objectiveness is inviolable; but one hope of science has been to attain a complete description of every conscious state in terms of chemistry and physics. Even the sense of conscience is to be expressed by the relative position of atoms in the brain, of their heat, tension, etc., etc. Enthusiasm will be rated and catalogued.

Man is simply a tree of nerves. All that can be said about intellect, heart, and body is represented in this tree. The higher life, or intellectual sense and feeling, is carried by nerves to which others are subordinate. The brain is a storage-room from which impression-carrying currents can be renewed after the external stimuli have ceased. The care of this tree of nerves is to be studied by learning its composition and reactions, involving thus its relations to the muscles and bones which it controls, and to the external objects by which it preserves itself. Its sensations are found to have arisen for the purpose of its preservation. The inferior nerves, or at any rate the inferior sensations, are arranged to warn of heat or cold which cannot be endured, to feel for that which is desired, to enable all action

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which will preserve the system or reproduce its kind.

The pleasures are, roughly speaking, the guide to its benefit. Even though the life it leads has become so complicated that the pleasures often lead to its destruction, pleasure is nevertheless like an oscillating compass needle — a variable from whose pointings we can by reasonable observation and calculation discover what is truly advantageous.

The nervous energy, by proper care of the tree, can be husbanded or restored. Then too, this same energy seems to be transformable, much as currency is transformable, from copper to silver or gold. The concentrated exertion of the mind is equivalent to large quantities of bodily employment. The energy of the mind is slowly accumulated by proper use of the resources of the body. The accounting and balance sheets of our nervous energy are still most difficult for the best physicians to audit. In fact a difficulty has been encountered in finding a unit of value. But when this difficulty is overcome, when the unit of value is found, all life should come under control of the understanding, and every mystery should be explained.

Or, if we look at life subjectively instead of objectively, we should say it is for the quest of the greatest amount of good sensations that nervous energy is active. The perception of pleasing sensations leads the nerves to seek their repeti-

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tion, and the continued opportunity of enjoying them. This governs in a measure the direction of the attention. Among the sensations, the attention picks and chooses that which will give the greatest pleasure — sensations have evolved something as the forms and habits have evolved, interacting one upon the other, by a process similar to, if not identical with, natural selection. That which was useful or preservative became pleasant. That was sought and found again and again, and became established. It was a mere incident when circumstances changed, and what had become pleasant was rendered detrimental.

Energy, however, influenced in this way, was that which lay at the basis of all life, energy obeying immutable physical law — energy running in fatal periods. The tides rise and fall. The moods run in seasons. We are critical or believing according to the distribution and behavior of this energy in the nerves. In a period when we carry a high charge of this electrical-seeming influence we hope and believe. Visions lure us. Belief in the power to control our surroundings arises. This bears fruit for our good, indeed, but fades away as the current is spent, and the more torpid conditions prevail. Then we doubt our morning hopes. We realize the cold truth, and perceive that our course is determined by the past from now to eternity. There is no need to say, "Best take what comes"; we *must* take what comes.

The social phenomena must be explained upon

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the same basis. Social virtues are simply the vehicle for the expression of collective needs; and the laws which men enact to regulate their conduct and affairs are simply a necessitated expression, part of the tribal man, as the convolutions of its shell are a part of a snail.

In this view all beliefs, being determined by physical conditions, would resemble electrical or magnetic phenomena. Wine, ether, disease, and other known chemical or mechanical agencies induce emotions of an inappropriate nature, as weeping spells when there is nothing to weep about, effusions of affection when there is no especial occasion for being demonstrative, and the like. So also all states of mind whatsoever fall in the physical series of events, relentlessly determined by external law, and the personal life of the individual becomes a mere shadow performance. Belief and emotion wither together and hence the flippancy and cynicism of eras of doubt. You can only regard a belief as baseless which you no longer hold; and thus also with an emotion, if we suspect it has no cause worthy of its influence upon us, it has already gone. If we do not have some belief in our emotions, they are not such.

We may have held a fair ideal of living, associated perhaps with the belief in a kind and personal God watching over us, and ready to stretch out a helping hand if we try to realize our ideal. Such notions must go with the rest of our positive

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beliefs. The world is cold and hard and fashionable.

It is hard to find anything in the mechanistic universe but cold, exact law, a material or basic substance upon which it works, and a cold, more or less imperfect, reflection of these laws in the human brain. Yet this view of the situation is not conclusive even from an intellectual point of view.

The methods of life, in the very nature of the case, preclude the possibility of discovering a complete correspondence between the subjective mental states and the objective history of the brain. I say complete correspondence, because, while it is true that for every thought there may be a change in the brain, those changes do not represent the total content of the thought. They cannot tally with every shade and quality in the thought because these depend upon non-physical elements. The attempt to find such a correspondence would be like trying to explain the law of the image which greets the eye as one looks upon a mirror, by a chemical analysis of the mercury on the back. The explanation simply is n't there. One cannot find an explanation of thought by an examination of the brain. You can point out a number of conditions without which there will be no thought, but you can never point to the cause of a particular thought in the structure of the brain. You can, of course, find a book in a library, you can describe its physical position and the

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dynamics of the shelf which holds it up, but you cannot imagine that book to be in the library for any reason disassociated from the meaning of the book itself.

It would seem, therefore, that the thought in the brain must be, to some extent at least, considered in its own right. There is an apparent discontinuity in the series of physical causes in which certain phases of mental activity intervene. Now why should the supposition that the intervention of non-physical mental elements modifies the physical world offend the sense of propriety of the mechanistic philosopher? It offends him because of his faith in law; for in reality he too has a faith. He reasons by the analogy of what he finds in the laboratory. Law is his infallible God.

The man who is sceptical about religion is not so sceptical about the version of the laws which he happens to be studying. But the process of doubt need not stop anywhere. What can any man prove about law beyond the experiments which he has performed himself?

We should probably find upon cross-examination that the most thoroughgoing sceptic unconsciously treasures a hidden belief. He has a reservation in his doctrine which has not been thoroughly probed. Moreover, no man is really willing to consider his soul a by-product — a sort of aroma from off the surface of facts. If the mechanical theory were logically carried out, there would be no room for the soul at all, certainly

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none for the will; and there could be no validity in the feelings. A spectator cannot feel, if he is not implicated in any way in the plot. On the part of the mechanistic philosopher, disowning his belief in himself is something of an affectation; and there is a large element of faith in his view of a law-abiding material world.

It is only here and there in some physical crisis that a man doubts everything. Yet each belief he harbors may in its turn be assailed. And as scepticism lays hold of us, we feel the urgent need of knowing what, if anything, is solid in life. In the end doubt eats up doubt, but the winnowing of beliefs by analysis and criticism teaches us how uncertain are the foundations of our everyday knowledge, how frail is the structure which supports our most persistent beliefs.

One may realize how slight is our knowledge of material things by reflecting upon light. Conceive it as a vibration of the æther, then we must have a definition of æther, as well as a definition of vibration. If we take the simplest conception of vibration, it is the motion of something backwards and forwards. But until that which vibrates is defined, our definition of vibration must remain incomplete, for we are dealing with two mutually dependent conceptions. To describe a vibrating object we must have geometry to deal with its shape, and physical chemistry to deal with its inner attributes and external relations. A moving

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atom, for instance, must be influenced in its course by its shape, size, and composition, as well as by the nature of the medium in which it moves. But the æther presumably is not made up of a series of objects which could be so described, but is itself the medium in which objects, such as atoms, exist. If the medium itself vibrates, the vibrating æther must be conceived as moving in relation to something other than itself, or its motion is meaningless. Moreover, the medium must be defined so as to account for the lapse of time during the passage of light through it. If we imagine it jelly-like or elastic, we are merely calling in analogies which may or may not mean anything.

Finally, if we conceive the waves of light to be a series of changes travelling in a continuous and otherwise uniform medium, we frankly abandon the attempt to describe the medium as such. What lies behind light and the objects by which it is manifested is indescribable, except as we conjecture this or that as a basis for certain observed manifestations. Indeed, each element of each science if we subdivide far enough becomes a matter of conjecture.

We perceive certain visible phenomena, and in seeking to find their ultimate nature we come everywhere to some element only to be interpreted by the mind. We get along fairly well as long as we deal in pure mathematics. But the application of our mathematics is a convenience,

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not a necessity. Every mathematic truth when applied to facts becomes only an approximation. Apply the mathematical fact that two plus two equals four, to four objects. It is simply directing the attention toward a portion of nature, signalizing by a convenient thought a part, which is not made up of four objects any more essentially than of billions of objects. The same truth will apply to any four centres of attention. It is convenient to describe objects in this and that way, but it is not essential. That is to say, looking at objects with a view to determining their constitution, there is no necessity for designating them mathematically, or as following any particular law. Your law is simply the habit of your mind in describing what you find happening in the universe.

Our habits of mind throw us into inevitable dilemmas. Returning to the problem presented by the æther: it is in reality a question as to the nature of space. We must choose between a something which is continuous, or a something made up of units, side by side, but if we choose units we must define in some way what happens when one unit leaves off and another begins; and furthermore, we have only driven the cat into the corner, for the space within the extent of the unit is still to be dealt with; and if we reach a unit which has no extent, an infinity of them will fail to describe space at all, for they take up none. If, on the other hand, we choose continuity for the nature of space, it is hard to see that space has

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any meaning whatever apart from the things which occupy it, for if it is continuous and self-similar, a small amount of it and a large have no essential difference. However, if space is continuous and only describable by the objects which occupy it, it implies there is something between the substances which we perceive. Yet how could this something be continuous and still allow bodies to pass through it?

With such difficulties the quest of knowledge is beset. Matter, or the ideas by which matter is interpreted, alike leave us in perplexity. Ideal beings, universal beings, or spiritual beings, if there be such, cannot avoid similar paradoxes. What kind of an existence has an ideal, the ideal of universal happiness for instance? Since there is plenty of unhappiness known to us, universal happiness cannot now exist; but if it does not exist what do we mean by saying it *is* our goal? You may answer that it exists in hope or aspiration, which means that it is imaginary. Is it then real or unreal? If real, what can reality mean in this sense? If unreal, what good is it? If unreal, what could distinguish it from one wild revel of unholy pleasure lasting forever? Is it not as futile to hope for one as for the other?

Those things which we know are slight and uncertain; but the attributes which the mind can find for that which we do not know are bewildering, and seem to preclude a reasonable theology. For example, there are the old problems of omni-

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potence and omniscience. If there is a consciousness greater than the collective consciousness of all animal life, the consciousness of a power which loves and wills, if it is omnipotent and loves goodness, why is there any evil in the world? Again, if a power is all-knowing and has no limit to its power, it cannot err, because unlimited power cannot do otherwise than choose the best, if it knows what the best is. But we err, since we do not have the best even that we know. Therefore, those laws by which we live are not unalterable, or else no laws emanate from an all-knowing, all-powerful being.

If, moreover, this power is omniscient in respect to the future, then all future events must be predetermined, and all willing, all valid, conscious activity is a thing of the past; your efforts are not virtues of the moment, but were arranged for you beforehand; and since it is all decided, prayer is valueless. If, on the other hand, our freedom is a real freedom, God does not know everything, for He does not know what any one of us may decide to do in the next moment. Then also there is the difficulty of reconciling the absolute goodness of divinity with the universality of divinity. If God is in every atom, alike in man, in rattlesnake, and in mosquito, in filth and disease, while at the same time He is the author of the abhorrence of evil within man, He appears to be in the position of hating Himself. It is simply taking the direct road to absurdity to apply any particu-

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larization whatsoever to God. Similar difficulties cling to any universal proposition.

The world is full of pests. For us the sting of the mosquito is a particular diabolical incident. Whatever advantage in the way of discipline may come to us from his existence, he does not enter into our notions of a universal ideal. For us he is an objective evil; but he has exactly as much right to consider himself created by God as we have. He carries on his blood-sucking activities in the same innocent spirit of good faith as we our parasitism upon cows and sheep. The same is true of lice, typhoid fever, and the germs of worse diseases. It was no demon who invented or created these things. There is a terrible equality of right in the whole universe.

These considerations, which apply alike to conceptions of the world and conceptions of spiritual things, have led to a new method in dealing with truth. There seems to be no fixed criterion in the universe; both matter and idea alike seem to yield to the sceptical process by virtue of the inherent nature of reason. Let us, therefore, embark on our raft of ideas, and float along as far as we can before it breaks up. An idea is a relative thing. Use it as long as it applies and then try another. Idealism and materialism are both true. One type of mind finds one more convenient for its purposes, another the other. Each is true in its own sphere. In other words, use is the criterion.

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This cheery solution reminds one of the awarding of prizes by the dodo in "Alice in Wonderland," or perhaps of the crocodile who holding the child in his mouth bargained with the mother by promising to give back the child, if she answered his question right, and then asked, "Am I going to eat the child?"

For the absolute, it is everything or nothing. The subtle relative has won all if the absolute yields the most infinitesimal mite. If we believe in ideas at all, we believe in them as absolute criteria. If they are historical only, if they exist only by the sufferance of use, they have lost their inherent virtue. They are no longer tests, they are checks and balances. They have only the authority of commentaries or annotations on the living stream.

Yet all this while the living stream is here, and our confusion arises, not from the depths of existence, but from our attempts to give an account of our existence. These are ultimately problems of expression. The ultimate goal of analysis is to show its own futility, except as a preparation for positive things. The vigor and reality of the beliefs we once held make us wish them back again, wish at least a believing state of mind.

Truth is. It is undeniable, unchangeable, inevitable. There is no escape from it, and no appeal from it. Other things change for it or yield to it. It yields to nothing and changes for nothing. Our

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speculations are simply a quest for truth, and having believed blindly and seen the stuff of our belief fade away, having doubted honestly, and found all doubting left us still living, we begin to perceive once more a genuine reality in the surfaces of facts, and we suspect that perhaps they mean something after all.

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PART III

REILLUSION

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CHAPTER III

CONSCIOUSNESS

THE soul craves positive elements; and thought, phœnix-like, begins perpetually to create new beliefs, to build, to affirm, and to renew the world. In the first result of complete disillusion we are left without solid elements on which to found anything; but the thirst of the desert, the sense of lack which makes our doubting so potent and revolutionary, is but an indication of the method of travail, is indeed the cause of our advance.

The fact that we are alive, in so far as life involves consciousness, is enough to give us a positive beginning for absolute truth. Not only *cogito, ergo sum*, but consciousness and existence are, in their deeper aspects, identical: and feeling or perception of any sort is absolutely real. The landscape may be taken as the type of the absolute. When the landscape looks beautiful, there is during the moment of this appreciation an absolute reality. But this absoluteness belongs to the consciousness which perceives, not to the changeable outward appearance of nature. If I think, I know I think. What I think, or what I see, I may not know; but that I think, or that I see, I do know. It is the same with all conscious states; what they are we may not know, but while they are, we know they are. But since all particular

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consciousness is at the mercy of the temporal transiency of the external universe, we habitually ignore this absolute quality in the original perceptions.

Now reason lives at the point where consciousness meets with truth. It is that which marries the soul to nature. It is the necessary or divine part of consciousness, that which cannot be other than what it is. Reason is itself a simple, unquenchable light. The understanding, however, which is reason applied to certain actualities, operating in the individual thinker to interpret the external universe, and finding that the natural elements obey its own laws, tends to attribute a greater permanency to the external or objective universe than to any individual bit of consciousness. The understanding thus indicates to the individual that this universe has a universal and inevitable existence external to and independent of himself, is in fact an evolving natural system from which and by which he himself was produced — a system in which substance bears forms which change according to exact, unalterable laws. From these conclusions came that theory examined in the previous chapter, that all consciousness arose from an inorganic or originally lifeless system. To some minds this is the ultimate significance of the doctrine of evolution. As opposed to this, reason insists on the universal aspect of consciousness itself.

It is the consciousness I say which contains the

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absolute, not any particular group of the objects of consciousness, no matter how universal their existence may appear to be.

To obtain further light upon this truth let us consider the relation of consciousness to this supposed inorganic earth, or rather let us consider the relation of the first consciousness in the universe to inorganic matter in general. For if the consciousness upon our planet was not the first in the universe, then there was, at the time of the dawn of consciousness here, some other consciousness, the problem of whose origin was the same as would be the problem for us, had we been the first. Imagine, then, the dawn of consciousness in the universe. Supposing there had been absolutely no consciousness whatever before the moment it first awakes, or becomes, it is manifestly a matter of indifference whether there has been previous to that moment a dead astronomical and geological history for a billion years or for one day, except in so far as consciousness needs one hypothesis or the other in order to explain what it has found since awaking. To illustrate, if the first consciousness were seated in a man who awoke in a stalactite cave, and found that an appreciable time had to elapse before even a small stalactite could be formed, and yet knew that at his birth many and large stalactites had been about him, he could reasonably conclude that inorganic processes had been at work before the awakening of his own consciousness.

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If, however, we imagine a universe totally devoid of consciousness, that is, if we imagine the condition of absolute unconsciousness throughout the universe for all time, — ourselves and no other consciousness ever having existed or ever to exist, — there is no reality left. The universe would be utterly dead. In such a universe spheres may roll, may swing in circles or jumble together, be lawless or law-abiding, it is all exactly the same. If it were all absolutely dead unconsciousness, and relating to no consciousness past or to come, there could be no distinctions, no differences, no identities, except the identity of one dead nothingness. Again, if we suppose the case of consciousness beginning at a certain point in time, and a span of time preceding that point, it is not really conceivable that duration which has no meaning while it is lasting, but is only to gain a meaning later, with the arrival of something new, should have any existence at all. Spheres may roll, or swing, or jumble, it is all the same as nothingness, except that consciousness when it comes, by a retroactive law, will ordain that things were thus and so. Or still again, if we imagine the last moment of all life coming, and consciousness ending forever, again there is an utter indifferency and lack of meaning in all that may follow. To think otherwise is to objectify one's own ideas to such an extent that one cannot recognize them as ideas. It is only with the fact of a consciousness to be born that a lifeless, unconscious astronomy

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begins to have the possibility of reality. Therefore, if we imagine the first consciousness in the universe resulting from some combination of hitherto dead facts, in fact from any unconscious chemical, physical, or geologic process whatsoever, we have the absurd proposition that that which gave the combination its reality came after, and as a result of, that which could not be real alone. Hence, if reason demands the admission of a real external universe preceding the dawn of any particular consciousness seated as ours is seated in animal life, it demands equally a universal consciousness by virtue of which that external universe exists, and a geologic, unconscious world, if it bears in itself the seeds of life, must be to that greater consciousness as the egg to its parent.

The imagination of mankind has loved to picture "chaos and old night," to fear the "outer dark." We tend to imagine a dead origin even as we imagine a dead future for ourselves. Now in reality these are simply projections of consciousness upon the wall of the unknown. There was in truth no such state of nothingness preceding our own life.

Consciousness is primary. Its objects are secondary. Consciousness governs its objects. But this of course does not mean that consciousness can happen without objects. Expression is essential. Much confusion has arisen from the attempt to conceive of consciousness without objects, or

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mind without experience. Even the "Critique of Pure Reason" bewilders us at times with this very attempt. Thought apart from experience is discussed as though the possibility of thought without experience were worth discussing. Thought is self-evidently an experience. All consciousness is a unity of many aspects which, though referred to separately for the sake of clearness, are phases of one whole. Subjectiveness involves objectiveness, but it does not follow from this that all consciousness is committed to a particular series of objects or forms of expression.

The externality of phenomena, the solidity of solids, and all other attributes are interpretations of the mind. How far they are rooted in necessity and hence absolute and independent of any particular consciousness, we can judge only by the reasonableness of the interpretations, and what reason postulates of them. Whichever road we travel in the interpretation of the material world, we come inevitably back to the consciousness; for if we trace any fact to its inception in our experience, it brings us to pure sensations; or if we follow the analysis of the fact to its constituent elements, we come to mathematical and other concepts which obey primarily the law of reason. But this does not mean that there is no material universe. It means simply that the material universe is the field in which or upon which consciousness operates.

We may thus assert the rights of absolute con-

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sciousness as self-evident; but the problematical character which always proves inherent in universal propositions haunts the questions which arise in regard to the relation of universal to particular consciousness. The difficulty is simply this. Man perpetually wonders what there can be of the universe independent of his thought of it. Do we not give all the facts the color of our own thoughts? Will not whatever we think be subject to the peculiar conditions of an individual mind? What conception can we have of what a universal consciousness can be? Our answer is that one peculiarity of the individual consciousness is the positive affirmation of universals. It may be difficult to distinguish between our particular notions and our universal judgments; but our reason nevertheless clearly affirms that such a distinction exists.

The mind, moreover, unhesitatingly postulates universality of material elements. It is the result of a drowsiness when the mind fails to postulate the same universality of itself. The body is taken up out of the perpetual cycles of earthly substance, and held in the human form for the lifetime of a man. So also the individual consciousness arises from a deeper consciousness, and must attribute its existence to the parental existence of that greater self.

We are led then to explore the universal elements of our own particular minds. Now the process of thought does not naturally proceed by

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formulas. To systematize in some fields, even were it possible, would be undesirable. In others we may, for the sake of letting light into the mind, adopt, as in geometry, this stepping-stone method. But the poetic or deeper truths have always come as fragments; we must take them and be thankful for them, trusting that the cumulative intellectual effort of mankind will gradually outline and portray the great unity of truth.

Meanwhile each of us sees some few aspects as more fundamental than others. These he wishes to emphasize. Beginning then with the most general data which the reason presents there are certain axiomatic propositions of consciousness back of which we cannot go.

AXIOMATIC PROPOSITIONS

1. Good is the most primary of all things. It is the test of everything else.
2. I, an individual consciousness, a being which lives, must be recognized in the expression of that which *is*.

   Note. The soul is the universal part of self. I and the soul are identical or not according to my purity or impurity.
3. The soul loves good. Love is the soul's attitude toward the good.
4. Happiness is an aspect of the good. Happiness applies to consciousness and attends the soul's attitude of love. Whatever is good must be happy or it is not really good; what-

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ever is happy must be good or it is not really happy.

5. Truth is an aspect of the good. Truth applies to objects. Whatever is good is true, whatever is true is good.

Note. Whenever we speak of happiness objectively we mean such as produces happiness in the consciousness concerned with this object. Whenever we speak of truth subjectively we mean such consciousness as is concerned with true objects.

6. These are the fundamentals of life, but life itself is undefinable because of its infinity.
7. Life demands that consciousness have objects, that goodness must be exemplified.
8. Life when particularized, i.e., immersed in time and space, is loving the exemplifications of goodness.
9. Love is in itself and always the direct exemplification of happiness. Gladness, rapture, and ecstasy are particular phases.
10. Truth finds exemplification by expression.
11. Mind is the faculty of consciousness which reasons or uses reason.
12. The language of reason is ideas. These are the component parts of truth.

In practice our expressions seem far away from the absolute truth. However we strive the actuality of ideas remains remote, or dim to each particular consciousness. It is hard to believe that

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they are real and burning now. Rarely we see dazzling flashes that convince us. Propositions couched in words are crude approximations to our thoughts. Thoughts in turn are faint and shadowy replicas of ideas. If you seek to analyze these fundamental concepts, they die. They are like the popular notion of an idea, a shifting mental phenomenon. Yet these copies which we have are all the language we possess for the definition of our existence.

We may make these further definitions. Life, involved as it must be in exemplifications, is experience. Action is the result of the love of the good in the conscious individual, and the dynamic force thus individualized and working in particular instances is will. Experience is the history of will. The actual is the result of the will's actions. Facts are isolated instances of the continuous actual. Sensation is the crude original substratum of consciousness out of which the facts are quarried by the attention. Facts may or may not be built into structures, may or may not be interpreted by ideas. But sensation or some awareness of objects is always present in the waking condition, and thought presupposes elements which tide the individual between any particular cognitions or reasonings. When the mind is awake, the soul loves the good by necessity. Faith is the preservation of the attitude of love when we are not directly conscious of mind. It is a spiritual momentum. When the mind is awake the perception

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of truth leads the individual will into actions productive of good. Right feeling attends such actions. Conscience is the result of faith bridging from one right feeling to another.

These propositions and definitions are impersonal as is all general truth. Yet as knowledge such general truth is accessible to each individual consciousness.

But we must clearly recognize the limitations of our personal thought, which, even while it recognizes the necessity of such propositions, is unable to explain fully their relationship to itself. Analysis shows plainly enough that our understanding is unable to cope with universals. Any idea or conception of goodness which we may contemplate loses itself behind a veil of particular imperfections and tragedy. It seems inevitably to become a non-existent goal, a production of the imagination, an object only of hope.

This, however, should not lead to negative results, but rather throw us into communion with the diverse aspects of existence. It is hard, indeed, to understand how there can be consciousness of a permanent, unchanging idea, for how could such a consciousness last? It is hard to conceive of any consciousness independent of the striving individuals of this or some other world. Strife seems essential to wakefulness. The friction of multiplicity seems to characterize existence. Yet a consciousness which was simply the aggregate of many individuals would not account for the

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absolute reliability of ideas. Nor can we dismiss our instinct to believe in an ultimate, real, unclouded happiness — a union with an actual divinity.

The truth is we do not understand infinity; the elements of thought which discount time inevitably perplex us. The past itself is strangely quick; the objects of hope are most assuredly real. And the imagination deals with something which is incomprehensibly actual. So also our dreams, with their mysterious comings and goings, their vanishing existence, and all the wayward, subconscious influences of our life as well, must have some place in the scheme of reality, must exemplify some type of being. Universals do not conform to temporal limitations and we must remember that we have not got to conceive of a universal soul in order that it should exist.

What we call our ideas are not original, but take their actuality from a more fundamental source than our particular experience. The truth overarches us like the sky, while our thoughts flow along beneath, taking its color, and affecting it as little as a brook affects the stars which are brokenly reflected therefrom. We are transient, the ideal is not. The permanence and stability of that which leads the soul to love has more right to be called real than we have. The existence of that without which our life would be meaningless is more sure than our own. It is by virtue of the reality of an idea that we know anything. It is

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by virtue of the universal nature that we are in essence superior to time, absolute even in our seeming transiency.

THE WILL: GOOD AND EVIL

At the basis of thought lies a distinction between Necessity and Fate, and this distinction corresponds with the distinction between Love and Will. All the absolute necessities are rooted in Love. All the fatal elements of life are the result of Will. The necessities are expressed by ideas; the fatalities by events.

The inner life of consciousness, its germ and kernel, is love. Love implies motive force. The attitude of the loving soul in itself creates motion, and in our particular history where consciousness is centred in the individual self, the life which love generates is the life of will.

The fundamental problem of the will is the problem of Good and Evil. Now, of course, goodness is far beyond the reach of formulas and propositions. Its nature is but dimly suggested by metaphysical considerations. Its portrait can scarcely be begun until we come upon the threshold of the beautiful. Our hints and presentiments of true goodness are almost too precious to name. Nature seems so indifferent at times, so empty of the spirit of life; and yet here on this little world, with its innumerable series of natural processes, culminating in the struggles of humanity, is our only portal to the Temple.

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Reason finds goodness at war with its opposite, evil; finds thus an inevitable and universal conflict at the heart of life. The conflict is in itself an evil or at least a half good. Are we not cast, therefore, into utter confusion, as we attempt the quest of a pure and absolute good?

Let us further estimate the nature of this problem. The will is the child of love. It is the creative impulse individualized. But consciousness itself appears to depend for its existence upon the will. For if there were nothing for consciousness to act upon, there would be no cause of motion or change. If there were no motion or change, our awareness of objects would die out, as happens in sleep. It follows that the conflict which love produces against inertia, evil, difficulty, and all other negatives is an essential character of consciousness. The strife toward beauty and right is life. If, however, there is in consciousness an essential conflict, if a structural component of existence is evil, and the contradiction between positive and negative a *sine qua non* of our living, has not the pessimist a metaphysical basis for his despondency which cannot be gainsaid? And is not the cheerfulness and exhilaration with which the robust heart greets the vision of truth but the dream of a fool's paradise?

Philosophers who penetrate into this problem too often fall into despondency. Much of the philosophic thought which has deeply influenced our era has been tinged with a profound gloom.

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The pessimist has an inveterate habit of saying to the optimist, "You have not known." If any one asserts that evil is not essential, or describes a particular terror, a pain, a fear, a sin with any mitigation of the characteristic features which its victim attributes to it, he is set down as a trifler. It is idle and useless to deny a terrible reality to evil, or to fail to see an inexorable necessity in conflict.

In answer to these difficulties, we must keep one great distinction always in view. It has already been noted that the nature of existence and reality is not simple; but rather there are different kinds of being. There are the absolute positive realities with which love deals, and there is, on the other hand, the will's particular history. We cannot understand absolute good, but we need not confuse our inability to portray it, with the particular problem of the will's struggle with existing evil. The negatives, evil, difficulty, and the rest, have a kind of existence. Evil must be dealt with. It is real in that sense. In our concrete life, in our experience, it is a real factor with the same kind of absoluteness that the landscape possesses, but it is not real in the sense in which an idea is real. It is not positive, it is not irresistible, it is not permanent. Goodness, I say, is positive; evil is negative. Goodness by its manifest, self-evident nature cannot die leaving evil in the universe. For to think of such a thing reveals to us instantly that goodness which could so die

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would be inferior to what we recognize would be good. It was Plato's profound argument that goodness is self-productive, while evil is self-destructive. Goodness here strengthens goodness there. Goodness in particular furthers goodness in general. But the more evil the weaker evil becomes; for when evils are tenacious, when there is honor among thieves, evil has borrowed a virtue from goodness. In reality evil is the enemy of evil as well as the enemy of good. There would, of course, be no reason for existence if there was no goodness and no hope of goodness in the universe. Then again, whenever unhappiness increases, the reason for existence grows less and less, while whenever happiness increases, the reason for existence grows stronger and stronger; hence the power of happiness has a cumulative strength, while the power of evil grows by its own effects weaker and weaker.

The type of existence which belongs to evil is more the nature of a dream existence, its essence is transiency; but the existence of goodness is of the nature of a waking reality. Yet the most profound, insistent illusion clings to our consciousness, namely, that goodness and its expressive ideals are transient, while evil and its weighty inertias are solid, inevitable realities.

The whole essence of intellectual progress is the banishing of this illusion; the realization of the waking actuality of eternal truth. This is the only way to overcome the influence of the major

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evils of life. How great the difficulty of this progress is, is made known to us whenever we suffer or see suffering. In the struggle of human life the passions flare up. Your life and mine burn more brightly in the swirling currents of pain and difficulty. The consciousness glows more and more fiercely as the passions are thwarted. Again and again we ask, Is not life one with this elemental struggle by which alone we seem to express ourselves? It takes a high kind of courage to believe that evil is only imaginary.

Always we must recur to that distinction between the universal and the particular which permeates the smallest elements of our life. The universal part, or the soul of man, escapes the limitations of the particular will and ever maintains its unity with the deeper self. But the particular will must encounter evil, face it and conquer it. Life as we live it is made up of this paradox. The self as we know it combines these seemingly irreconcilable elements.

The relation which exists between good and evil has no meaning without progress. All pains are growing-pains. The necessity of goodness casts a phantom reality upon evil. Goodness gets its body and weight from evil, but evil exists for no other purpose. If goodness derives a value from evil, this value is only a value in the overcoming of evil. Creating an absence of evil, its abnegation and denial is the method of success. Evil is convertible into something not evil. The

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nature of progress is to make that which apparently had a solid reality unreal; to cause an evil, which had been given rank among the fixed factors of life, to become as if it had never existed. Evil is a preliminary, and so far as we can understand as we look up and down the stairway of progress, evil is simply the name of the pull toward a direction which leads to nothingness, while goodness is the creative push which carries us in the direction leading to greater and greater degrees of existence.

THE WILL: NECESSITY AND FATE

The fundamental agency within us is the will. The feeling that you are free to decide between two alternatives is your sacred and inviolable right, and the content or meaning of that feeling is real. Each decision is not determined by the past. It is a creative act. The facts, the events of the world, stream away from this core of existence in all directions. Your fate is built upon your past decisions, or we may say, fate exists only in so far as we have already decided.

Now the wolf or the child never doubts the validity of his native will. It is only after the sceptical method of thinking has torn up our beliefs that we become conscious of any problem of free will. The normal attitude of mind is to believe entirely in our right of choice. At first sight we find the results of simple decisions are clear. We modify nature by our activity, we chop down

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a tree, set waves in motion by throwing a stone into a pond, build a road, or burn a forest.

On the other hand, a man is an utterly impotent spectator in the presence of a thunderstorm. Supposing for the sake of illustration that the will's activity as it affects objects is wholly necessitated, its freedom of choice purely illusory, that our whole physical life in nature with all our motions is part of a series governed rigidly by natural laws, there is still opportunity for choice in our response to these laws, and what they bring forth. If my house is struck by lightning it rests with me whether to be cheerful or despondent. So also if I become ill, I may be patient or angry according to my choice. In this view our will may be acting while the stuff upon which it acts is wholly unmodified by it. Thus the response of the conscious self to the natural processes can be like the audience at a concert which may subjectively interpret what it likes from the music, without influencing the programme. But this meagre appraisal of the power of the will, this feeling that the will has no relation to the power that chose the programme, is really irrational. To imagine a complete insulation between the interpreting will and the natural facts requires a stretch of the imagination quite unwarranted. An interaction must exist between the conscious response to the natural facts and the facts themselves. The notion of a purely spectator consciousness imagining itself to be making effective

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decisions, when it is not doing so, is nonsense. Therefore this interaction is not mechanically automatic, but consciousness gives something with its response; and if the will modifies nature at all, it must be in itself a spontaneous cause.

Choice has been at work like the madrepores of the coral reef, building, building, building the solid structure of circumstances. That is to say, circumstance is the accumulation of past decisions, for every petty decision assumes the character of an unalterable fatal element in the past. It is thus also that innumerable little decisions make the character; innumerable little decisions printing themselves either in the material structure of the individual or in the external structure of the world. Indeed, circumstance is but the imprint of character on various forms of inertia. Yet, when we reflect upon the momentum of habit, the onward sweep of events already set under way, the encircling influence of tribal or national decisions which surround us and shape our destiny, to doubt the efficacy of our own choice seems more natural than to believe in it. For once the deciding impulse has cooled, and in the world there lies behind us the series of irrevocable facts, the mind tends to doubt its own power. There comes a paralysis from the written record of what we have done, a borrowing from ideas belonging to the past to lend terror to the future. Moreover, subtle necessities brood over the will, at first little

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recognized, but later seen to unite each little life with the processes of the ages.

Back through the generations extends the series of choice-wrought fatalities. We can trace the origins of man's condition in individual or racial choices as far back as history goes. One series of choices produced the lion, one the wolf, and one the man. The circumstances have varying histories, some old, some new. We are enthralled among customs of greater or less strength. To ascertain their rights and enduring power is an endless enquiry. They constitute alike the resistance to our progress and the field in which the struggle of the will takes place. But in searching for the origins we come in the end to a borderland where decisions cannot properly be called such, and our development rested upon instinct. It is true we can see the process going on about us of decisions crystallizing into instincts, and perhaps most of what we call instincts are decisions which crystallized at a more remote date.

But the consideration of instincts brings us directly to the problem of vegetative life. Here the plants have been hemming us in, growing and developing parallel with animals. The plants have a life as a cause, back of their complex network of limitations just as we have life; but inasmuch as they are unconscious we cannot imagine them as having by an infinite progression of decisions shaped their histories. On the contrary, we consider them the result of unvarying, impersonal

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laws. Thus their fate was identical with necessity, and took shape in law. Similarly our instincts and much of what we superficially take to be our decisions are so saturated with necessity that the will is unrecognizable. Indeed, the vegetative part of our own development seems to be governed by the same laws as that of the plants. The instincts evolved in harmony with these. Thus biological analysis appears to invalidate the series of our decisions. The discovery that a large portion of our activities could not be other than what they are for mechanical reasons, suggests anew that all seemingly wilful acts are illusory and that the mechanistic philosophy is right after all.

Yet the will in its operation in everyday life is absolutely real. If we wish to lift a stone we may lift a stone. There is no absolutely determining factor before the choice is made. The biological interpretations must adjust themselves as best they can to this primitive truth.

The vegetative law nevertheless penetrates deep into our inner nature. The study of heredity has shown how limited in many directions is the sphere of our personal choice. Here, however, we must be careful to distinguish between the biological heredity which is a matter of physical law, and philosophic, or practical heredity. It does not matter to the parent whether the child inherits a love of the sea through germ-plasm or through his environment. In the philosophic sense everything is heredity — the physical environment is

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simply its outer fringes. The yearnings, aspirations, and efforts of the parent constitute a series of factors bearing upon the future life of the parents, and upon the fate of the children. The biologist must tell us whether or not any of these factors are lodged within his precincts. He seeks to discover how much or how little the stream of conscious influences has passed into the physically transmitting medium. But the factors as manifestations of will are a real part of life, indeed, the most real part of life, no matter what the student of heredity reports.

The tendency of recent research has been to find variations in offspring somewhat aloof from, and independent of, specific influences in the life of the parent: variations launched out of the infinite, but whose behavior once launched follows vegetative laws, the law of Mendel and the like, rather than personal influences. Let this teach us that we have not been trusted by the universal will so far as we had begun to suppose. And yet the individual and collective will of man and animals has an activity parallel to all vegetative evolution, and the total effects of this activity are never adequately gauged or known. If we again consider the illustration of the concert and its audience, we shall find that the relation of the conductor to the performance, the conductor who leads the musicians but does not produce the music, more fitly than the audience, represents the relation between the will and the natural facts.

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The vegetative laws, the laws of Mendel and all that biology can disclose are no more and no less formidable than the laws of thunderstorms, of astronomy, or the laws of the universe. The problem comes to this, what is the relation of our volition to necessity? Necessity alone is utterly inexorable. But as we attempt to further apprehend what we mean by this, we find that our whole knowledge of necessity arises from the character of the mind. Necessity is the unalterable basis of thought. The biologist, in order to describe the limitations which law imposed upon life, comes at length to mathematical truth.

We are governed primarily by ideal necessities. It was by the constant application of unchallengeable ideas that the biologist as well as the physicist and chemist made progress toward expressing the natural laws. The study of heredity teaches that the germ-plasm reflects the laws of the universe more directly, and the personal influences more obscurely than we previously believed. The personal influence, the more recent changes in the nature of each animal are more outwardly reflected in the offspring; and the characters "in the blood" are of more ancient, if not of quite impersonal, origin.

The biological problem is of the utmost practical significance, for it concerns us deeply to know in what part of the environment, seen or unseen, is seated the result of our own particular push: in what direction from the encircling physi-

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cal medium is the reaction which shall affect our children to come from. But the will has inner laws of its own which are equally practical. The whole life of the parent is radiating influences into the universe, and these are charged with a spiritual magnetism which we may trust to carry them where they belong. The deeper problem is metaphysical.

Necessity in its operation is law. A part of necessity is the existence of will. The will is necessitated to act, but the essence of its activity is to exercise a real choice. This makes it valid and creative. A little reflection will show that since the will is a spontaneous cause in each case where it acts and modifies nature, it has the same kind of power as the laws themselves. The two act jointly in producing results. It is thus that Divinity, which is the author of necessity, reaches even to the heart of particular or individual life.

It follows from this that necessity leaves a scope for that which is not necessary. The present is the home of freedom. As soon as a decision is past it freezes. Our fatal activities, free while they last, receive the clamp of necessity as they end. The past is all inexorable. But the past as we know it is alive, for we know it only through the present, in which we remember or forget. The past is taken up into the present by the potency of our freedom. Among the laws we still pursue an illimitable happiness: not by struggling against

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the unalterable, but by greater and greater degrees of obedience.

Divinity itself cannot change the necessities. These simply are. The will cannot change the factors of life emanating directly therefrom. The soul cannot will unhappiness. It cannot prefer evil to good, nor will unreasonable things. If we think otherwise the particular self has fallen among errors and confusions. But there is a universal will which influences our own particular choices, but is not influenced by them, a will which wills only good, which is errorless, and in one sense omnipotent, that is, that in its sphere is irresistible; so that when we understand its tendency — the tendency toward real goodness — we become successful. On the other hand, we must recognize that the incarnation of self is far from complete in its identification with this universal will. The particular self wishes, desires, chooses unreasonably, and creates a strange particular history resulting now in pain and distress, now in solaces and pleasures.

The parent or universal will is the spirit of love. Love is in its nature universal. Particular acts of will bud forth from the permanent attitude of love, which varies in strength within us according to our circumstantial histories. The particular will may err, but its errors are not essential to it. Consciousness, though inevitably characterized by the struggle of the soul toward goodness, though it demands that a struggle *shall have been,*

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can know neither evil nor death when the conflict is won.

Difficulty of conceiving of heaven arises because the consummation of our life implies the arrival at infinity, in view of which the understanding fails. There are passages in opera music in which a voice or instrument holds one note while the rest of the chorus or orchestra runs through a long series of changing harmonies. The single note remains true and unvarying, but it continues to give a fresh impression deriving variety from the variety going on about it. Thus the absolute may be still, yet alive in the mind. We know even here and now of happy activities without taint of evil. Life has its painless changes, and love knows of variety with no shadow but the shadow of repose. A spiritual sunlight casts its happiness even into the simple activities of this transient life.

But let us not mistake the nature of this light. It is a perpetual temptation to confuse the good with the pleasurable, the easy, a state of mind of peaceable enjoyment. Dreams of beauty allure us earned by earlier endeavors, lighted by inherited tradition or waked by the monuments of great accomplishments. But the fulfilment of our dreams we could not and would not accept unearned. They are not fulfilments if they are not won — if they are not attained by the overcoming of those difficulties or confusions which they are a departure from. Throughout this life love

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may at any moment lead us into pain and sacrifice.

In reality all the delights of experience get their virtue from the overflowing of the inscrutable inner nature toward which religion is groping. The virtues are the merest stepping-stones, blocks quarried out of an infinite mountain. True goodness is above, beyond, yet permeating all else. Its essence can only be found in acts of overcoming. It is measured by effort. It is not for us to calculate the reward.

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CHAPTER IV

IDEAS

REASON is a permanent subjective realization of the essence of truth, whose different aspects thus realized are like the different parts of a spectrum, the personal consciousness being as a prism. The ideas of reason are its nouns. They demand their own authority and coherence, nothing more. By them the sensations which come flooding upon the conscious centre are lighted. Our perceptions fall rapidly into a scheme. Points, lines, planes, triangles, and spheres; measure, number, permanence, time, momentum, all unite to construct a world. There is a hierarchy of ideas beginning in the simple utilitarian concepts and formulas, and leading up to the ethical elements of reason.

All that is known of space and time is derived from some aspect of our consciousness. Your house and the tree across the field are connected, so far as any thought of yours is concerned, only by space; and space, as we think of it as a continuous medium, is a component, or feature of consciousness. The house and the tree alike are transient, and to your shifting perceptions the space which unites them has no reality except as it is marked and characterized by such shifting evanescent phenomena, as the gravel and loam,

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the grass and flowers which intervene. And yet the mind recognizes a necessity and a law in these connections. The idea of a continuous space is beyond the reach of these changing phenomena by virtue of its being an idea. Thus also all that is a necessity in the objective world is ideal. The newsboys go to the news office, take up a sheaf of papers, all bearing the same print, and carry them in different directions selling and selling till all are gone. The facts emerge loaded with the burden or print of one or more ideas, live a short and eventful life as carriers, pass on their meaning or value, and disappear.

Our thought proceeds by arresting aspects of truth — the attention rests ever so slightly upon a part of the natural flow of consciousness, stamps it, and thus utilizes principles, concepts, and the like. This is our experience of ideas, but the realities back of such experience are not to be rested upon. Take, for instance, the idea of a point. If we try to conceive of it, it retreats at once into its uses, and as a primitive concept has evaporated. For a point fills no space and therefore cannot be described by any inherent character or quality. It is dependent upon position, that is to say, upon its relation to things outside itself; but all things outside itself are changing. Thus it is describable only by relative terms which deal with variable phenomena.

Yet ideas reappear after every analysis with their original significance. In the history of our

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personal thought we discover constants, recurring thoughts whose meaning is always the same, or if there is any variation in the meaning, it is because of new relations in which the idea is found or new uses to which it is put, and not from any inherent changeableness. These constants are absolute in themselves no matter how changeable or relative may be the intellectual experience by which we become aware of them. Two plus two always was and always will be four. We may appear to create the concepts we use, for we gradually institute them as habits of thought; but concepts, principles, or ideas are always ready to hand. Being invariable, being capable of the same use in the same circumstances for all time, they are not subject to our own historical development. It is only the expression we give to them which we create. There would be no meaning in relativity if there were not something which was not relative. In our experience there may be no fixed inch; all examples of inches are shifting; all thought of inches, as of everything, is in process of change. There is, nevertheless, an absoluteness in the difference between one arbitrary inch and a length twice as great, or between one inaccurate material measure and another. If there is any inaccuracy in a measure it is inaccurate by virtue of the fact of an ideal exactitude. There would be no possible method of discounting error, deviation, and modification if there were not a standard which does not change. The existence of the rela-

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tive implies the existence of the absolute. The existence of error implies the existence of that which is not an error, and so on.

It is with difficulty that we escape the limitations of relativity, and of finite appearances. We marvel that a sperm-cell should transmit the character of a man. But why is it more marvellous that the germ should carry character than that the man should possess character? The scale of magnitudes stretches to infinite maximums and infinite minimums. If the cell were magnified to the size of a man, it would not astonish us that it should have as much variety as the man. Why, because it is smaller than the objects which our eyes are gauged to see, should it not be infinitely complex in structure, even as the world of which it is a part is infinitely complex? Or supposing it to be comparatively simple, one part like another in substance; dependent for its nature upon its relation to things outside itself; it would remind us that the form and structure of the human body is in one sense completely dependent on things outside the body. It has hands to reach food, eyes to see, ears to hear, etc. Thus the complete description of any one thing involves the complete description of every other thing.

It is impossible for the understanding to cope with an idea. An idea has no more proof of its own existence than has a pure sensation. Either you apprehend or you do not apprehend. Nor does your seeing or not seeing have the slightest

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influence upon the necessitated or ideal element in your experience.

The universe is a structure of concepts. Ideas give us our world. The stamp goes on each thing automatically by the act of thinking of it. Conversely we must explore into the nature of everything to get at the nature of ideas. Our version of truth to be of any real value must go around to all the departments of knowledge and be checked up as containing the data of all. We shall find a thoroughgoing, hard-headed materialist will quite unconsciously make a better portrait of an idea than many a so-called idealist. Materialistic notions are merely misnamed ideas.

We must look for something absolute and inexorable to which the human mind is the key. But we must recognize also that thought, our only means of apprehending truth, is in motion, is alive. You accept some formula or explanation, the nebular hypothesis, the atomic theory, feeling like one who has got into a clubroom where all is quiet and settled, only to find that you are not in a clubroom at all, but in a railroad car which moves along after you have got on board of it. Insoluble problems arise from the relationship between ideas and change. The whirling facts draw the ideas into obscure mazes, and irrational or capricious distortions. Yet once we escape from the region of personal choice, there is no caprice whatever. We may hope in time to learn by culture of the intellect the beauty and rhythm,

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the reaction and cycle in all that is chaotic, to see the dance and fugue of reason, its mystery and song, not only its still, icy mountain peaks.

The absolute plunges into the relative and the ideas ride upon the waves of change. They appear to swallow the whole universe, and yet remain but points of view. Inasmuch as they are known as integral parts of a historic consciousness, they look out of time. They cannot escape their relatedness. It is in vain to conceive them pure and lonely.

The mind demands the existence of a pure independent idea, but it fulfils this demand by disregarding the relatedness of ideas. These archetypes, the point, the line, the triangle, the idea of a plane, of a solid, of mass, of motion, of externality, are all related. Yet in the measure of their meaning and extent they are wholly independent of particulars. In this sense the ideas are real, unchanging, and absolute.

TIME

It never troubles the idea that we appreciate it only through experience. The temporal element of experience is itself grounded upon an idea.

The will is immersed in Time. The will could have no sphere of activity without Time. Motion of any sort presupposes Time. Time and Space together are part of Necessity. Yet Time like Space is lighted into reality only by ideas; having no more right than other absolute realities, per-

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manence for instance. If we ask ourselves how it happens that we conceive the idea of permanence while Time exists, and renders any experience of permanence impossible; for reply we may find in the idea of permanence itself a proof of the permanence of ideas. In any case a mathematical formula such as $2+2=4$ is sufficient proof of the validity of the idea of permanence.

In thinking we simply trust ourselves to truths which cannot change. Thought in its particular history continually attaches itself to eternal ideas. It is like the long streamers of kelp waving in a tide-way, rooted in fundamentals and trailing into the stream of time. But this figure and all figures are but the shifting drapery of illusion in which the temporal idea is veiled. The sense that time is streaming by, or that we are moving through time, alike are illusions; for all truth, all reality, is seated in the present. The past is given off from the present as the sparks are given forth from a rocket. Because when once it is given off we can fix our attention on any point in the series the present has created, and affirm that that point was once coincident with the present, we imagine we are at a point in a series going on into the future in advance of us; but in reality no such advance exists. There is no such series until it is past. There is no future at all. The present is perpetually modified by its own activity, or rather the immediate conscious self of the universe, which is what fills the present, is perpetu-

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ally changing, and this is the origin of a continually renewing present. But all that we project into the future is imaginary. It is the painting on a blank wall, of notions, phobias, pictures, or dreams gleaned from the past. The past is historical, the future is imaginary, the present is personal.

We must, however, distinguish between the personal experience of time and the historical necessity of time. Imagine a man passing through an agony: an accident has happened, and those who are dearest to him hover between life and death. He is waiting or acting throughout the night. His activities are feverish and concentrated, his waiting is crowded with hope and fear, innumerable memories return to him, he is swayed by dreadful anticipations; and curious moments of philosophic speculation come like annotations to a printed page. Into these passing hours years of experience are condensed. Suppose in the same street three doors away there is a laborer tired with an honest day's work, who, at the moment the accident befell, sank into a dreamless sleep, and all night long parallel with that agony, he lies unconscious as the walls of his house, and waking in the morning knows no experience of time. For one ten hours meant nothing. He shut his eyes and opened them again, the world tells him ten of its hours are gone; for the other the greatest moments of his life have been passing. But what measures the conscious passage of time?

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Surely nothing in the external nature of the world. Time is indeed infinitely elastic. And yet by some temporal element in life, the experiences of these two men will fit exactly together. The present moment is a unity for the universe, and out from this unity personal experience cannot by any means escape.

There is also an unerring reality, so far as we can observe, in the principle by virtue of which a chronometer, or the more permanent periods of astronomy, can be made to measure the changes of the natural world. This principle is the historical necessity of time and is derived from our investigation of the past. In this investigation mechanistic ideas are necessary because the past is absolutely fixed, and it cannot be described without ideas which express that fixity. The present, to be sure, includes this description of the past as one of its factors, but is only in part limited by it. The whole question of the influence of the past upon the present resolves itself into a question of dynamics, or more specifically of momentum. This leads us to the consideration of Law.

LAW

It is a natural error in the progress of thought to suppose that ideas interpret the world rather than that the world interprets ideas. In this confusion lies the root of a large part of philosophic controversy. It is true that the ideas of a given group of men interpret the world as a child

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interprets his father's book by reading it. The child may read and reverence the book, but the book is the product of the father. It has no original growth of its own. The world is the product of the spirit and illustrates the laws of the spirit.

The study of force, of motion, of momentum is, in reality, the study of life. The vast momentums of astronomy are proof of the antiquity of the spirit. The universal symbol of love is gravity, and similarly we may find the life of the human heart portrayed in a thousand ways in the natural processes, the recognition of which we call symbolism.

Now in the discussion of will, there appeared a distinction between necessity and fate, corresponding to the distinction between love and will, and again between reason and understanding, and ideas and thoughts. This distinction divides a higher from a lower sphere. Activities corresponding to the higher sphere, that is, the sphere of reason and necessity, are absolute, unalterable laws, but the wilful activities, activities which might be other than what they are, operate in the subordinate sphere, and are obviously not necessitated.

In the sphere of particulars, that is, in the world of everyday life, where we see plainly that things may be one way or the other, where there is wrong as well as right, the understanding is baffled in its attempt to reconcile the conception of universal law with the existence of lawlessness and error. If

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laws are universal and necessary, how is it they can be broken?

At first sight we might conceive that mechanical aggregations should by law make mistakes. There might be a law which led to destruction if the facts were thus, to evolution if the facts were so, and the activity of law might constantly produce both sets of conditions, and consciousness be a spectator at its own lawful evolution in the one case and destruction in the other. In this way there could be unswerving, inexorable laws, and yet errors. But what a foolish way to look at the world, how utterly irrelevant to our interests and destinies.

If we push home the distinction between universal and particular, the difficulty will in part be cleared away. In the first place, universal laws are not incompatible with error and confusion; indeed, to be universal, law must be in some way related to the apparently lawless or chaotic phases of existence. Such laws, however, are not mechanical nor can they be comprehensible to the understanding, emerging as they do out of infinity. It is only as they become particularized by application to given sets of facts that the understanding can grapple with them. The particular aspect of law applies to particular facts, and is not irrefragable.

Consider the case of a man laying out a garden bed which is meant to be an exact circle. The course of his spade is governed by the geometric

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nature of a circle, but in point of fact he deviates from the true circle which serves in his mind as his guide. He is in error with respect to a circle, but that does not mean his spade has escaped into a lawless region. Particular laws are of account only in the exact course of their influence, but we may break away from any particular application. Lawlessness always means lawlessness with respect to particular laws. On the other hand, universal law exists regardless of all breaks of particular law and has no reciprocal relation to phenomena; it governs, but is not influenced by the facts which it governs.

In their own line particular laws reflect the inevitableness of the universal laws. Thus, if we find here and there what appear superficially to be breaches in the law of gravity, such as the action of a magnet, we do not for a moment suppose that the law of gravity has been suspended. By experiment we can give practical proof that gravity is acting on the magnetized body, and the activity of the body is always a joint product of the two forces; then we unhesitatingly attribute universality to the operation of gravity. Nevertheless, the phenomena of the comet's tail, and the theory for explaining it, — namely, that the force of light acting on the atoms of matter in their separated state is greater than the force of gravity, — shows how conditions might exist for a consciousness in which the force of gravity was not known, or if known, would be negligible.

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We may always, at some point in an investigation, reach the limits of application of any physical law. At such a point the law becomes particular and not universal. There is no evidence in nature — other than such as is based upon probability — of the universality of gravity or of any other physical or chemical law. The assumption of this universality arises from the necessity of such universality in ideal sciences like mathematics. That which gives universality to law is mind. Thus, whenever an absolute character is found in the physical laws, it is because the mind stamps the facts as it finds them.

Chaos and confusion surround the will in its particular history, for the moral laws or laws of love presuppose all forms of opportunity. The law of our being is primarily spiritual. Nothing can be spiritual which is not free. The necessity of freedom is the keynote of universal law.

The will is necessitated to choose. What we think of as freedom is the exhilaration we feel upon abandoning a lower, and coming into obedience to higher, law, into harmony with deeper necessities. When for instance a man chooses self-denial, in place of selfish desire, there is after the abnegation an unpredictable unfettering of his nature. Yet the opportunity to deny the higher impulse is what makes volition real. The soul is Godlike. It lives among laws which are unlimited, laws incomprehensible but to itself. It is itself absolute, carrying the eternal truth in

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its eye. It creates with complete authority. Necessity receives its creations as the cradle receives the baby.

UNITY

We are children of one spirit, we need have no fear of universal laws, nor shyness in the presence of ideas. As we come into unison with the universal elements, as we apprehend ideas in their purity, we find the necessities are beneficent. We do not chafe at law, because the utmost freedom could not induce us to set our will in opposition to the law of love. We perceive the vision of an ideal sphere, a realm of truth bewilderingly brilliant and joyous. Our difficulty is in seeing the truth clearly enough to be convinced of its certainty. There is a beauty and perfection about ideas which we do not dare to think in any way appertains to ourselves. It is not easy to own our inheritance. We doggedly persist in a discontinuity between ourselves and God. The ideas so resplendent before the intellectual gaze seem alien and unreal because not personal.

Yet if we ask ourselves where the self leaves off and the external begins, we find at once that the seat of consciousness is unknown. Without a cortex, no consciousness. But we may say with equal truth of an electric lighting plant, without a bulb, no light. The dynamo may be going, the current running in the wires, and yet, if no bulb or similar device is introduced in the circuit, no

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light will be visible. Our self is associated with the resistance by which the current illuminates. We know only our own cast of thought. We attribute the idea of self to the particular limitations against which the light of life is projected. Thus, the child knowing nothing of dynamos and wires will think that the bulb is the source of the light. We similarly think of the brain as the source of consciousness. Yet the supposition that each conscious self is inevitably associated with the particular brain it uses, has no basis in necessity.

Every bit of consciousness is identical in certain respects with every other bit of consciousness. The manner in which fishes lose their little individualities by the constant, devouring process of marine life, is suggestive. Where does the awareness of the clam leave off in favor of the satisfaction in the crab who eats him? Has the victim a divine intuition that his million cousins live placidly on and on? There is no distinct line where one consciousness leaves off and another begins. On the other hand, every moment of time gives, in each consciousness, some distinction between itself and every other moment. Thus the ideas of differentiation and unity are blended in everything. The character of the unities is expressed in variety. But the unity of things is the more fundamental element in their nature.

In the physical world the seat of consciousness is not necessarily anywhere, whatever its special

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manifestations may be. As the body is but a sponge maintained by the liquids it absorbs, a sponge perpetually fraying away at the edges, and renewed many times within the lifetime of a man, so also the thoughts of the individual are at all times passing in and out of him, and all his principles and concepts are built out of the common stock of humanity, and his own proprietorship is an illusion. The self is deeper still.

If the stronger vibrations or currents in the universe were annulled, we might perceive other vibrations or currents as we perceive the starlight when the nearer light of the sun becomes dim. Thus we might find the remoter parts of nature, the vegetation, and the rocks and sea, were linked with our own being by intimate sympathies, more exact and inevitable than our present poetic fancies even give a hint of. Then our instinctive repugnance to pantheism would seem trivial.

I recall the picture of a lily pond in a wood of sassafras and tupelo. Over the flowers dragonflies are darting. On the margin are mosses and ferns, sedges and reeds, and low arching loosestrife, above which a bank of blueberry, clethra, and other swamp bushes forms an encircling wall of leaves. What has all this life in common, each part with each? This picture lies in my mind a unity. A unity it was when I came upon it, a little gem in nature, complete in itself. It has its own individual character shared by all its parts, but deeper than that, it has the universal spirit of

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life; and we may wonder as much at the variations between sedge and sedge, lily and lily, as at the brooding unity of the whole. These flowers, one much like another, reveal a single character, exemplified many times, as a note or chord in music may be repeated over and over again.

If one watches blackbirds wheeling over a marsh, one may see thirty or forty individuals change the direction of their flight apparently upon a single impulse. Perhaps all react simultaneously to the same outward event, perhaps one is leader, and all the rest follow him; but so instantaneously is the signal obeyed that you will fail to distinguish which the leader is. In either case here is a single response linking these birds together. The individual, as the spatial, differences are superficial. The birds feel alike and act alike; essentially they are identical. It is but little different with man. People often become nearly identical in their sympathies, or with respect to certain aspects of life they become completely identical, the differences branching apart as they meet a different set of conditions. Our differences are annulled or held in abeyance by strong patriotic passions or similar influences; and like the blackbirds, many men will act as one.

We are more or less remote from one another, as one part of a man's body is more or less remote from some other part. Personality is continuous. Nowhere does your own personality leave off and the external world begin. There is something for-

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eign in every particle of your body — something which may be cast off, and the conscious self remain the same, and there is something appertaining to you throughout the whole extent of nature. Intimate sympathies lie in store for us among alien surroundings, or remote corners of nature, and even peculiar and strange forms convey an echo of familiarity. The unity which the eye gives the pond is not arbitrary or fanciful. It is a necessity in the mind to find nature thus. All is a hierarchy of unities branching from deeper unities. Our particular self as we ordinarily think of it is but a trifling part of our whole nature. The self even in its particular history dates back into the obscurity of the generation which preceded us. The blood-line has a strange and shifting identity throughout its length. The self as a private individual is lost among its limitations only to reappear in deeper more far-reaching relationships.

Personality itself has an incalculable scope. Our astronomical so-called universe is particular and individual, albeit shafts of universal thought illuminate its vastness. We constantly attribute universality where it does not belong, trusting too far our particular notions; and shut out the influence of wild or wayward instincts which could lead us to an outlook on a higher sphere.

SELECTION

Each human soul is born with an instinct which teaches him there exists a reality better than his

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present condition. The ideals express a spiritual necessity. The light of ideas shining upon what is wrong leads us to strive toward what is right. Consciousness evolves by its own choices.

Among the flavors and aromas of our particular occasional sensations we pick and choose. We pursue, childlike, whatever is attractive. This instinct is innocent and strong. For, after all, it is not among severe moral restrictions that happiness is to be found; it is rather in the quest of the beautiful. We need not court difficulty, for if once we perceive flashes and gleams of the ideal beauty, our road is rugged enough. Love is utterly imperative. The operation of its law compels: if we have ever seen or even dreamed of the better we can never be content with the worse. This law applies to everything, sensation, thought, and affection alike. We do not seek discipline, we seek a finer and ever finer happiness. Discipline, by love's own necessities, governs our seeking. And as we realize more and more fully the nature of true happiness, we take discipline the more cheerfully, and shirk it less and less.

Beauty is the immediate and intelligible goal of our particular progress. We would not ordain virtue for others. We would give them beauty. For ourselves we cultivate beauty by pursuing virtue. We value the immediate objects with which we deal for their beauty, and virtue is the soil or nourishment upon which they live.

Now an object is but a temporary crystalliza-

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tion of an impulse in its course through the mystically uniform substance. Our attention takes the impression of objects and becomes a propagator of selected pieces in the web of impulses. You look into a garden. Your eye roves around among the flowers and presently the attention rests upon some flower, and instantly the mind makes a mental note of the pleasure it has just experienced. Again and again the eye reverts to that one specimen, and later, — months, it may be years, later, — the memory comes back sweet and fresh. Then perhaps in time you make your own garden. You seek that flower, find its name, obtain and cultivate it, and thus your cherished impression is propagated in the physical world. The home and family exist by virtue of the same law.

The world progresses by a process of selection and emphasis. Every word and action is a carving out of a plastic material some exemplification of what the speaker or doer prefers.

The potency in the eye itself is illustrated by an experience related to me by a friend. He had spent several days at cow-punching, — an employment with which he was unfamiliar, — and in the evening, while riding away from the herd through the woods, discovered that he saw the forms of cows continually appearing among the trees. On closer examination he would find no cow in sight. He explained the phenomena thus: in the lines on the retina of his eye, presented by the trees and rocks as he passed through the woods, an

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almost infinite number of combinations exists. The cows being, therefore, abnormally prominent to his mind, he sees them continually, though there are none in sight, unconsciously choosing their forms out of the labyrinth of lines presented to the eye.

How easy to conceive through the same influence the forms of satyrs and nymphs in a miscellaneous woodland scene, the expectant eye supplying the art, which for the painter signalizes or groups the lines which present these forms. Even so it is with omens. Among the vast and intricate data before our eyes and ears, he who has a premonitory instinct within him, places his attention upon the significant fact or combination of lines. We speak of something arresting our attention. Our attention arrests the something. That which we give our attention to, carries the expression of our meaning or feeling or state of mind. A reinterpretation is a redistribution of attention. A new account of a fact in history is often different from the old merely because the emphasis or stress is arranged differently. When materialist and idealist thrash out their differences, it comes in the end to a question of emphasis. Any sentence means a slightly different thing according to where it is accented. Nature looks wholly different according to what it is called.

In manners, in customs, in conversation, in all human intercourse, this selective habit marks the domestic life of the creative impulse. It is not by

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idle repetitions that we advance. Thoroughness alone is vain. It is a greater test of character to be discriminating than to be complete. The encyclopædic method of appreciating truth is utterly fallacious. Our function as living beings is to choose. As Burbank throws away countless plants, after selecting a handful which carry the one character he values, so our records are shuffled into oblivion but for a gleam or spark here and there saved from the dross. So also all the laborious efforts of our lives are subordinate to a few golden impulses, a few hours of inspiration, a few communions of love.

Thus our world cannot by any means be taken at its face value. There is a meaning back of every impression. The illusive joy of childhood is rooted deep in nature. The strange feeling that awakes at the cry of certain birds, a blue jay in the swamp, a wood pewee in deep woods, or a hawk over the marsh, proves that these sounds are for us, even if we cannot interpret the meaning. Within you lurks a predestined monition which calls to your notice those things which shall become the food of your existence.

Often our progress comes from the reinterpretation of facts which we cannot change. Our words are just as fatal as our deeds. Our names, our whole vocabulary, are constructive or destructive, much more our thoughts. How the thought of home sings in the heart of an American when he first sees the Stars and Stripes floating in a

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foreign harbor. Then for the first time perhaps he becomes a citizen of this country. It is largely by the recognition of greater relationships in commonplace things that we grow. There is no experience so revolutionary as the act of "unmasking the disguised Gods."

You cannot escape the influence of names, of words, of suggestions and associations in yourself and your companions. All society is built upon them. The fashion is as much a part of the stream of time as the bubbles are a part of the river. Everything has its sign and symbol. Everything has its word to give. You too must say something. The bluebird and the song sparrow sing and must sing. In the South the cardinal sits on a tree pouring into the soft air a stream of liquid beauty. He is but obeying the simplest natural law. Like him you are impelled by an internal necessity to express yourself. But more consciously than he you are dedicated, and cannot content yourself until you have rendered your best.

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CHAPTER V

REILLUSION

I

At a certain stage of life a man discovers that criticism and analysis are self-destructive, that scepticism as a permanent attitude of mind is profitless, and with this discovery he begins to feel a new respect for his early impressions. If you have seen a beautiful picture, even if it vanish in the next instant, that one moment was absolutely real. Thus it is: the spirit of life forever welling up within the universe after long periods of dearth brings us fairy gold once more. It is comparatively unimportant by what name we call the spirit so long as we commune with it in some manner. It may be saints or fairies, or birds or flowers, commonplace or dream, intimacies or festivals. Our eyes are opened to vital truths, indiscriminately, by a variety of means.

As we begin to treat our own consciousness with the reverence which is its due, romance begins to steal into the world, now here and now there, until one day we discover that the poetic element which we thought we had analyzed and explained, had in reality eluded us, had retreated out of our experience long before our clumsy thoughts could

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grapple with it. And here are our illusions back again, or new ones more potent to make us wonder.

There is a wayward element in nature. We only half trust the laws. Here is a field of grain upon a hill — a high wind sweeps across it, the light and shadow in constant rhythm play over the surface as the gusts follow one another. Once it was the Rye-mother or the Rye-wolf in the crop. Now, though no one has ever examined or computed these motions, yet, because of analogy derived from other discoveries, it is law. There was a time when man dealt with these things by a fantastic imagery. Perhaps he became gradually conscious that his mind was creative as well as nature; but his own fancies were grafted upon an interpretation of what he thought was real. As the long filaments of algæ might have been taken for an actual mermaid's hair, so here in the grain a moving, conscious, wilful spirit was seen. And still the actual relation of these living motions to the law is unknown. Here is vegetative life, here a sleeping spirit responding to the touch of the wind. And you wonder if this is really governed by law, or if governed by law what is this mysterious personality in the grain, which answers to your own heart. Ah, the law has nothing to say. The spirit of romance has touched your heart, some hint reflected to you, whence you know not, but you recognized it. You should kneel down and thank God, and pray that your

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intellect may at some other point thaw into fluidity.

Those people who tell us they have no illusions might well be asked to tell us what the exact truth is, for the assertion that one has no illusions is a covert claim to infallibility. But happiness lies in the other direction. Give us the people who swim in a sea of illusions; and if there is a law within their joys it cannot be expressed but by music and song. Who could ever name the law of enthusiasm or of abandon? — an infinitely subtle law put into the mind of the poet *gratis*. He is a king in his sphere, the laws must dance or sing for him if he wishes, and the light of his mind pierces the remotest corners of nature, and makes all physics and chemistry irrelevant. He cares not a whit whether or not there is a mathematics for the verities with which he deals.

What possible explanation could any physical science give for the color and form in our paintings, for the shapes of our monuments and sculpture? What natural law accounts for the Elgin marbles? There they are in contrast to all the rocks and stones upon the earth. Manifestly they pleased some consciousness, and there was a genius with an intuitive knowledge that just these shapes would please. And if some one suggests that these marbles were made in imitation of living forms, we may reply that it is not the imitative part that interests us, but that excellence, that beauty, be it ever so little, which surpasses

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the models which the artist may have used; and that selective power which made him choose just those models from amid a thousand other available ones.

That which governs the production of works of art is a potency inherent in consciousness, a selecting power which must act. We choose what to us is desirable, we judge by what pleases. The working of this law, if law is the right word, we cannot trace. There is an unknown, unaccountable element in pleasure directly influencing our choices. Since also the sources and elements of pleasure are in one sense primary and elemental in themselves, we cannot calculate the original causes of life, of growth, of progress toward the beautiful, by any science whatever. And as every atom of matter is embedded in an æther whose nature and properties are inexplicable, so every event, every experience, every thought is embedded in an absolute mysticism.

II

Now when one finds that his beliefs, his impressions, his contact with the shifting phenomena of the world have yet a reality and potency which during his periods of doubt seemed lost, he begins to enquire with a keen appetite for the richness in nature which he thought was gone forever. He begins to question how the belief in the supernatural came to possess its wonder, its flavor, its profound significance. There is always something

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in the totality of a belief which its elemental factors fail to explain.

There is a sea captain in the New England coasting trade, a man of chequered career, who once told me about a haunted ship which he used to take to sea. There were uncanny noises in the hold, which greatly disturbed the crew. He stuttered as he said, "I told them it w-w-w-was r-r-r-rats"; then he added, "But it w-w-w-was n't r-r-r-rats." Apparently his was the type of mind which believed in these things, believed in the actual presence of supernatural elements. Well, what was actually there? The captain will probably die in the belief that the cause of these noises was spirits; the crew will perhaps die in the belief that "it was rats"; and you and I may believe it was the creaking of the ship herself. It may be assumed that there was a physical basis for the noises; that is to say, there were sound vibrations, even if they were actuated in the first place by spirits. There is then a physical basis, and three diverse interpretations of the actuating cause. Three beliefs exist side by side profoundly modifying the mental impressions derived from an identical phenomenon. Now the interesting question is, and always has been in such cases, whence came the sense of supernatural power which gave rise to the supposition that spirits haunted the ship? Supposing that rats did cause the noises, then how came the captain to imagine spirits; how account for the awe in the captain's

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mind? Is it not more remarkable that he should conceive of spirits if there are none, than if they actually exist? It is true the superstition may have been imported from another mind; but that simply transfers the problem to the other mind. Where does the superstition originally come from? It cannot matter much what the data of the senses may be if the mind is free to read that data in its own way.

That which makes you and me discard the crude superstition is its unreasonableness in the light of other facts which have led to more comprehensive interpretations. We prefer more refined superstitions that we have not yet recognized as such. The old mythologies were not gratuitous falsehoods, not capricious fabrications. They were necessitated outbursts toward truth. They recognized an inner actuality in nature lost sight of in more recent sceptical processes of reasoning. Our picture of nature is in process of evolution. But the passing bloom of early impressions, the glamour that vanishes as we make the outlines more clear-cut and strong, has not gone forever. Whatever added richness or charm to the beliefs that have been superseded may yet be harmonized with our present conceptions by knowledge yet to come.

The fairies are not dead; they have only been driven from their former homes. When men professed to have discovered the truth, when they claimed for their own imaginations the authorship

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of the fairy forms which they perceived, the fairies withdrew. The forms of trees, of ferns, of flowers, and of animals were already preoccupied. Mankind gave himself over to scientific investigation, to minute examination, to the exploring of the whole length and breadth of the natural world. Now and then some illusory charm flashed through his brain, some lure which had little or no relation to the work in hand. He plodded on, until on the confines of science he found the whole journey left him where it found him. This world was of his own choosing. That one celestial hint discredited it all. The fairies are not dead; they have but retreated to a more congenial sphere.

Why has the blindness of materialism clung so persistently to modern life? You hear music that revolutionizes your mood, recalls long-forgotten emotions or stirs every fibre in your body with a fire of activity. Afterwards you think all this was the physical effect of material agencies. Wine or opium has done as much for some men. As if these agencies were not the merest common carriers, as if opium could produce a vision, where there was no vision to be produced. As if you created the landscape by opening the window shutters. The tones of flute or violin or voice of man or woman have little or no existence but as they rise to meet a living need, but as they carry an extra-material meaning, — a meaning known only by the heart, understood only by being alive.

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Whatever is beautiful the earth strives for. Here and there the cadence of some song — the tones perhaps of a great soprano — floats us toward the shore of paradise. What would we not do to reproduce these moments! What would we not do to have them perpetually renew themselves in our experience! The forms we love best enjoy already a sort of immortality. The Greek pillar rises in countless villages and cities the world over. Our study and art is to combine and preserve the finer essence in outward things.

But we must be cautious in our conclusions, for beauty thrives in evanescent forms. It would not be so potent if it were not so rare. The rosebud or wave crest whose beauty is loveliest in its most transient stage reminds us that the happier life is short and pure. Life need not be secure. What care we for its pompous stabilities. Immortality exists only by an escape from Time.

All the potency of imagination, all the dream mystery of joy, all the richness in the universe is contained within the spirit; and our varying shades of emotion, our awe and wonder, our hopes and aspirations are inflowings of something real. The natural universe is a series of responses to the pulses of who knows what fathomless soul.

III

Scholars may well have learned by this time, such emphasis has been laid upon the point, that persons who live subjectively, who recognize the

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authority of the human mind as primary, and the objects about which the mind thinks as secondary, tend to disregard those factors in experience which are determined in and by the external world. The thinker, the philosopher, is always regarded with a certain degree of distrust, connoted by such characterizations as theorist, visionary, and the like. Any one suspected of belonging in this category is frequently urged to look into the world to find what the facts actually are. But if the philosopher looks into the world and finds everywhere, even from the remotest corners of nature, reflected the light of some mind, he soon wishes to get his knowledge first hand. If the scientist takes his readings from the face of nature by the light of his mind, the primary elements of the interpretation exist in the nature of consciousness, and are available for the philosopher too. But also he yearns for a union with the deeper or universal mind which unites these interpretations and makes them real.

While much of our experience is capable of a tolerably exact interpretation, we cannot afford to ignore the unknown or mystic side of facts. As we become more strict in our judgments we become more and more aware of the pervasive mystery, the infinite unknown close behind all that is known. But more than this, because of the positive nature of our own ideas, our own activities and decisions, we recognize behind each concrete fact is lurking something intimately associated

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with our happiness. A gift is a gift by virtue of a spiritual element. No physical law explains the value of deference. Our calls, our congratulations, our condolences, all our amenities are charged with a non-physical magnetism. Hence there comes a time when the enquirer gives over studying the history of matter, and interests himself in the history of the soul. Matter thenceforth becomes a language only.

Life, as we know it, at best is fragmentary. The transiency of personal happiness gives all life a visionary tinge. The physical continuity, the temporal continuity, is subject to savage breaches. Accidents and catastrophes make no account of the visible objects we love. The mind has envisaged the world in cold, impersonal abstractions, frozen ideas, mathematical and exact; but the heart prefers an irrational dream, if only it is warm. It has no interest in the perfection of the physical law which brought it sorrow. Not only is the soul expressed in what we call waking states, but also in dreams.

We find that dreams have space and time as much as the waking state. In fact a dream has all the factors of a waking state. The difference is that waking states have been more completely unified by the mind, and the breaks between one set of phenomena and another have been subordinated to those universal elements with which consciousness has found that facts conform. The unity which connects dreams with one another or

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with waking moments is a spiritual unity, its most definite ties are matters of sentiment. Beautiful faces recur in sleep usually with the utmost truth, at times with artistic perfection. There is no break in the objects or associations of love. These things ride at ease upon the turbulent waves of dreams, which completely upset the formality or continuity of space and time.

Suppose that the apostles dreamed so vividly that Christ walked upon the water that there was no difference in distinctness between the dreaming and waking state. Suppose, for instance, that Simon Peter's consciousness passes from one condition to the other and back again. It would soon become apparent that the laws which governed the activity of phenomena in one state did not govern the activity of phenomena in the other. But if each were equally real seeming during its presence, we could not call one any more actual than the other.

In experience, however, a series of states of mind clings together with many universal elements in common, and these states are broken at regular intervals by states of partial consciousness in which come the dream states, for the most part unrelated to one another, and lacking any rational principles for their order and behavior. Hence we call those states which cohere, real or actual, and those fragmentary bits of experience which come in sleep, or float detached and inconsequent around the edges of waking life, unreal,

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insubstantial, or imaginary. But these states as I have said are often permeated by a spiritual unity. There is no reason to condemn even the wildest, most chaotic dream as unmeaning simply because it is a dream. It must influence us or not like a waking state according to its merits. There are delicate and essential hints which the mind seems incapable of grasping when broad awake, and day dreams are a sort of ante-chamber where much of our progress is originated. In our fancies we dream out the drops of balm, from our crude, distressing experience. At night, after the day's attempts have all been made, and the results have become an irrevocable part of our life, hope gathers the golden meanings and washes them till they again reflect the sky.

The whole series of waking states in the light of higher ideals are fragmentary and irrational. But more than this our particular lives are preparatory and provisional. The prophetic vision of the future, which is simply the lead the soul must follow in its growth, is always visionary. The highest aims of mankind must necessarily be dim while at a distance.

We cannot afford to scorn dreams. It is their agency often which brings us to the verge of the promised land; where we look once more upon the splendor of childhood. But howsoever we yearn, our mortality confronts us at the gateway of realization. As distance must forever be distant from the human eye nor can ever become

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near, however much we travel over the earth's surface and approach objects which were once distant, so also the essence of beauty is always beyond our reach. The distance itself is sacred and inviolable. It is a permanent mystery, born of the union of permanence and beauty. We may gaze at it as at a lovely child, but the parent is immeasurably more distant. Our own heart tells us as we grasp at each happy realization, if it is attainable it cannot be my original imperious dream.

Yet there are deep satisfactions and rich joys. Nature is always leading us on; and we forget that abject adoration with which we lay before the altar of Beauty. You step out into the soft breezes of a warm autumn day; walk where the leaves are brightest; there is a sensuous pleasure in the woodland smells and the colors of autumn foliage. But something beyond the simple pleasure came with the pleasure. At times the deep richness of early associations is found among the twilight tones and shadows. Sometimes we hear over the crest of the next hill the echoes of a fairy festival, on the next instant lost to the wistful ear. The subtle spirit is ever stealing about through nature peeping at us here and there.

All these natural impressions have a greater hold upon us as we recognize the potency with which each personal glimpse of consciousness is thrown. The intellectual sphere is a region of extreme joys. We find paths that lead on and on.

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Sometimes it is a familiar memory, sometimes an alien gleam. The brain is stored with recollections which group themselves by inexplicable affinities. Certain eyes suggest the distant mountains. Early dreams relate themselves to travels into remote countries. Vivid chance impressions, a tree, a painting, an entry, a bit of blue sea become associated with stimulating or fascinating persons and always touch the same chord.

All these experiences suggest the infinite relatedness of the mind. Those impressions which strike a deeper note may perhaps be a deeper part of our experience, shared with other persons, sympathies which reinforce one another. Those dreams which startle and rouse us, often prophetic, at least in the light of sentiment, are so because they are part of an ideal ritual, habits of long standing, in the intellectual world. And the shock of recognition comes because we are simply verifying what we have known before.

There comes at last a time when the most exact truth appears like a fairy story, gives us the same simple wonder that a miracle would have given us before. And as the daylight of ideas shines brighter the witchery is not dispelled, but rather we recognize that it also is reasonable. The state of reillusion is not the fostering of old illusions, but the return of fulness and wonder to every sight, sound, smell, or taste, to every impression, fiction, and dream. It is not that the fairies come back. The fairies were never seen, that was their

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charm. Realities they were which did not appear. It is that the fairy quality returns to nature, the fairy feeling to the heart.

Every too material age will crumble away before the believers in witchery, in spirits, and in Gods. But when clearer light pours in, these in turn prove crude gropings, ministers to ideas which have been familiar to the simplest child. Still comes the morning freshness to teach us the immortality of youth. Nature is utterly imperative. Life surges on, and while it flows full and strong what care we for Greece and Rome. The world has its Parthenons and Shakespeares but monumental as they are, they are but monuments. We thirst for what is immediate. We suspect Nature has let slip her secret somewhere and hunt industriously for the lost clue. But hers is an open secret published to all the world. It is the universe riding here before our eyes, and singing in our ears. We blink before its dazzling light, we falter as we speak its impulses. We never know that we always know.

The life we see breaks on the crest of an illimitable ocean. We are embarked in a shallow sanity upon this sea. Those formulas, those codes, reasonings, rules, names, all the expressions which we use are severed in our experience by lapses of oblivion and unconsciousness. They are almost accidental in the flow of life, like the little swirling eddies of a vast, sleek tide. We take up such

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reason as we need-but it melts as ice melts, it is gone as the mist is gone. Banker and broker, student and artisan, even among the actions which they understand best sink momently to an exhaustless cause. The stabilities of fact give way to deeper heavings; and the geology of intellect from time to time reveals cycles of whose arc we had no surmise. At last some hint tells us the slow combustion of mortality was lighted, even as the gleams of heaven are lighted, at Love's original fire, and the whole Universe burns.

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CHAPTER VI

IMMORTALITY

Go to a headland where a deep current sweeps into a deeper sea. Beyond its eddies is one unswerving trend. Even so the waters of life, mixing, merging, in mist and darkness, or lined with sunlit ripples, seek the open ocean.

Life breaks up periodically, and with each break, large tracts of our being die. From the home influences we go to school, and childhood's folklore is given up. From school to college, from college to the world, each is a form of death. Habits and customs contain us, hem in our vitality, and become deeply associated with what we mean by self. When these habits and customs are gone, much of what we felt to be self is stripped away. But for a healthy soul all these transitions are as the smaller current flowing into the larger, not a loss but a gain.

Death is a phantom. What can we know of an absolute end? In its nature it is unknowable, an unbroken, dreamless rest. If consciousness lingers after what we call death, that consciousness has not suffered death. All that we think of in or near the fading hours lies in a twilight, the facts shrouded by approaching darkness. The objec-

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tive manifestation, the disintegration of the body, absorbs the powers of imagination. We are alarmed by the break in nature, or the pain attendant upon so many forms of dissolution.

We have a vast weight of superstition to overcome. But all these fearful imaginings are the work of the mind. The skull and cross-bones, the spectre, the gruesome or hypnotic conceptions, as in the picture of Dead Island, or in Homer's strange and beautiful narrative of Odysseus' journey to the other world, and all the imagery and symbolism are a product of life — life as it faces the mighty phantom, as it yields itself to fear, or struggles in pain and grief. Nothing positive can be said of death. For there is nothing positive about it. We can only assure ourselves of what death is not. We can but prune away false notions.

Yet the fact that this nothingness cuts athwart our whole temporal life brings the problem of immortality home to every living thing. Is there an inevitable negative which cuts off the individual self from the deathless, universal truth?

The problem of death brings all mankind into sympathy. We build and build, in the family, in society, in nationality, structures which we vainly hope will last. The human elements are so precious. Friendship and affection are all in all. How can these be at the mercy of poison and chance or accident, of decease and age? Yet the laws of

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termination are utterly inexorable. The heart is ever crying to know more.

For this reason those who have suffered, unless withheld by rigid scepticism, are ever wishing to grope into futurity. The same tendency which leads us to evoke a spectre in the name of death, leads us to imagine a continuation of our own temporal or mortal history beyond the temporal event of death. Literature is full of projections of this life upon the curtain of the unknown. Some of us have our own ghosts. And can there be any one who has not felt the influence of the spirit world? If only in literature, we yet know of such vivid realities as Hamlet's ghost. We have half believed or wholly believed in a personal actuality communicating with us from the twilight zone. Yet only to the power of the imagination is this a testimony. Could we look behind the curtain, we should not find even the scurrying of rats.

There may be communication with the dead, but if there is, we have no way of distinguishing it from the activities of memory. If a friend who has died appears to you, you have no way to be sure it is he but by memory. If he appears in new surroundings, he has not returned to this earth. If he tells of events unknown to you which you later verify, it is rather evidence of thought transference from some living mind attributed by your dream-thought to him, than evidence of any new activity on his part. Indeed, suppose a

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dream so vivid and continuous that you have all the reality of a new set of experiences with your dead friend, a new and fresh intercourse, it can still be the work of your memory. Upon awaking and finding that his body is no longer of this earth, you can have no possible way of appraising the event or naming its cause.

It is not that there is any prohibitive reason why we should not receive impressions from personalities which are actually living, after they have passed the point of death. It is simply that such manifestations appear to be unprovable and also unimportant. The dead do not guide us through revolutions, or if they do it is by the influence of their intelligible imprint left in the world before they died. They do not write epics or paint pictures or solve scientific problems. They do none of the characteristic things which make them what they are to us while living. Obviously, except in cases whose causes are already determined, they could not foretell future events, because we are ourselves free to make future events.

The influence of each personality is printed on the world as the tones of a voice are printed on a graphophone record. And as the echo is released at times and takes effect in the world, so from the face of the world or from the impressions in the memory the personal influences of bygone days again and again are set reëchoing.

Whether or not, among the many unexplained

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influences upon our lives there are some which emanate from new activities in the life of those who have gone, we cannot tell. Nor is it easy to believe the question concerns us deeply. The dead never come back and appeal directly to the reason with new arguments for their continued existence. The life which they have already lived is sacred. We do not wish it desecrated by one false word. May we not suppose the soul has in a lifetime enough use of this mortal mode of expression, and that is why we die? All that we love comes through this medium; all that we love can come through it no longer. Is not the memory the holiest link that later on will ever connect us with this vision of each other which now is all that an earthly life can give?

Earthly life — but what do we mean by this? We know too well the provisional and fragmentary nature of our little existence here, to believe there is no larger sphere impermeated by a more wakeful life. Why, the very sense of its inadequacy subordinates this visible world to the cry of the soul. Indeed our discontent could only come from an innate knowledge of a brighter reality. He is a poor student of his own consciousness who cannot see that life is immortal. The immortal nouns of thought imply an immortal thinker. The life of ideas goes ringing on through the universe forever. They are utterly beyond the reach of death.

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But the immortality which the intellect admits seems, at first sight anyway, cold and impersonal. The little self within has other and nearer interests. What intimacy have you or I with the heaven of ideas? If these great truths were beautiful, if they enraptured us in our finer moments, we received no promise from them as to hearth and home.

The ideas have many forms of continuity. In the first place they have given their own immortality to the material essences of this world. The circulation of the elements about the planet exhibits an equilibrium which we translate as an endless system of cycles. Even if the world is cooling down we believe the astronomical cycles follow self-similar laws forever. The chemical atoms persist through successive transformations. Thus the material of the body is never annihilated.

But this cold permanence in matter gives slight consolation to the individual self. The cycles interest us only as they affect consciousness. The perpetually renewing seasons, which give the return of spring after the deathlike phase of winter, come closer to the personal problem. The cycles of nature reflect the cycles of mental states.

Now a life, to be life, must change or at any rate know change. Yet how can things change forever or change at all and yet be immortal? Evidently an element of change belongs to all particular things, and this element of change is an evidence

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of mortality in them. If, however, a change is but a cycle or period, the relation of a part of the cycle to its recurrence may explain our difficulty. The circulation of material elements suggests the periodicity of moods. Our memories will not come back to us on some days, whereas on others they return with startling freshness. We pass through cycles of experience and frequently find ourselves traversing familiar ground.

An element of sameness, an element of change, go together to make up all life. Yet the element of change itself has a sort of immortality, for in its application to particular life it is universal. This thought suggests that the whole of life is immortal when viewed from the standpoint of ideas, and mortal only when viewed from the standpoint of particulars. We can see how in the infinite activity of change exists the possibility that everything which ever has been or ever can be in the universe shall recur.

The theory, however, of an absolute recurrence due to a complete cycle in which experience begins to relive itself when the cycle is ended, and reproduces each successive passage of the cycle exactly point for point, means nothing. For if two cycles were identical in every particular they could have no knowledge of each other, they must coincide absolutely, and two, ten, or an infinity of them would be no different from one. Imagining them end to end means no more than imagining them all going on at once.

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The desirability of the recurrence of an experience rests upon the need that each recurrence shall be under at least slightly altered circumstances. We have no wish for an absolute recurrence. Even when we imagine that we wish an identical reproduction of a sensation, we are deluded: we wish that sensation enhanced by the after knowledge that it was worthy to be repeated. We never really want back the ignorance which a state of innocence would imply. The love of innocence is really the love of health. If our receptive organs are healthy, it is a gain to have our memory alive.

The theory of recurrence gains vitality from the spiral tendency of our progress. We come back over the same part of the field, but higher up. And as the course of the earth through the æther is a spiral by virtue of the progress of the solar system toward the constellation Hercules, so the sweep of a man's personal thought is carried on by the progress of the society to which he belongs.

There is another side to this question which the continuity of matter suggests. This is the immortality or approximation to immortality of the race line. Riding on the impersonal flux of material elements is the continuity of the self through children. The self goes on and on. The terrific power of the reproductive impulse would lead us to believe that nature holds all continuity cheap beside this. Yet the nobler souls among us plough

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themselves into their work, and their sympathies and influence spread and grow; carrying the seeds of their personality far beyond the range of their immediate contact. The character of a man is lost among his descendants in a few generations; but the character of a genius, his behavior and deeds, are reproduced for centuries.

We may be certain that life is immortal. It cannot be so mad and irrational a dream as that all this hot reality be subject to the accidents, the destruction, the mortality which we perceive. The ideas give us a perfect assurance of immortality. Yet however sure may be our confidence, the question which haunts us is, What stake does the self have in this? What is our relation to the immortal ideal?

That which keeps us wondering, that which keeps alive the restless questioning is the *I*. What am I? Where do I come from? Where shall *I* go?

If we take the analogy of incandescent lamps in an electric circuit, we may see the difficulty of delimiting the self. Where is the self of the electric light? If you smash a bulb, the combination of current, wire, and vacuum which gave that particular light is annihilated, but the potential current is still alive. With a new bulb virtually the exact circumstances could be reproduced.

Thus also the self derives its vitality from something far deeper than the body can explain; but at what point and how this vitality dips into the

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physical medium we cannot by any means ascertain. We understand the self best by its own experiences. We are impotent spectators by the deathbed of another, understanding what we do understand only through our hearts. The self finds itself immersed in the moving current of time, but time as an experience varies always with what it contains.

We know not what our experience may be in the gradual slowing-up of time. If death is a sleep, it is the last moments before death wherein the glimpse of immortality may come. The fatal fact approaches the awaiting consciousness. It is the moment of complete annihilation for the self — beyond the moment, eternal life. If time or the experience of time ceases altogether, the soul rests. Has it then merged with God? Has the individual at some moment in the running current, which the rest of the world perceives, stepped out of time: even in that moment before the sense of self has gone forever?

So far as we can conceive the nature of duration, there is infinite possibility in the millionth of a second, or in any fraction of time however small. Heaven may float into individual life upon any infinitesimal scrap of time; but of these last seconds, until one passes through them he cannot know.

Speculation as to the last experience of individual consciousness is utterly futile. As sickness and torpor crowd into the body, the self retreats.

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Sitting beside a deathbed, watching the last hours of unconsciousness before death actually arrives, it may appear that something momentous is going on, some great experience, something utterly beyond our comprehension, yet real and actual for the soul that we love. But if this is so, the body can but dimly reflect the truth. We have in that deathlike sleep no clue. It is the hours of most vivid life which teach us more. It is in the exaltation of striving, it is in the wakefulness of perfect health, that we understand best the irrepressible onward sweep of an existence which cannot end.

If death is a sleep, what is the significance of the analogy of dreams? Do we wake at death?

When unconsciousness becomes complete, time ceases. If the self shares the indestructibility of life, enormous stretches of time mean nothing to it so long as its sleep is absolute. The passage of time, as measured by the law-abiding cycles of the world, or by the waking experience of individuals, means nothing to the sleeper. If you die and sink to an absolute rest, the duration of your sleep is irrelevant to you. If you are to maintain your identity in a future waking state, there can be no difference for you between beginning to live instantly upon death or waiting till time has passed away, and then finding yourself alive. The experience is instantaneous in either case. If at death our experience continues temporal, then

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the length of our sleep matters only if the terms and conditions of this life have any reality which will persist after death.

If this be a dream from which we wake, and these but dream figures among whom we live, wife, child, and friends insubstantial shadows even like the creations of our night dreams, and our whole circumstance, our bodies, our world unreal, we must rest equally assured that these same dream figures are based on real figures, these insubstantial shadows are cast by real beings, and the wife and child whom we love in the dream, are based upon the actualities of the beyond, even as our night dreams are simply fragments of the life of day. There would be no waiting for the dream figure of this life to die before we could meet again.

This analogy, however, should not mislead us, for there are realities in our lives which will always be real. There is an element in our love which would lead us back to earth, if life went on without it after death.

But prejudices from near-sightedness have great tenacity. We are so presumptuous in our scanty world. How little thought we take of time. Conceive the period of man's evolution from the cave-dweller till now, say two hundred thousand years more or less. What is this? How long has Arcturus been evolving planets, and what of the illimitable space beyond? Are we earth-born creatures alone in this gigantic universe? In all

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the infinity of time, are we the trifling result? How faint the possibility that we are without an audience of superior beings, an audience to our secret thoughts and deeds. How little chance that vibrations unknown to us are not interpreted elsewhere, or in a sphere we cannot appreciate whether far or near.

If the ants reasoned, they might learn to understand the natural laws, just as we understand them, and yet not be able to perceive the activities of human will as distinct from other manifestations obeying natural law. We do not break the law of gravity when we move. Ants might conclude that we were as unconscious as we consider the moon or the clouds. We may not yet have learned to distinguish the agency of personalities which we do not understand and their influence upon us, from the agency of more remote and more divine natural law. We are wholly incompetent to pronounce upon these questions either one way or the other.

It is narrow and unreasonable to suppose there is necessarily no intervention in our lives by a will or wills superior to our own. As we watch over a sleeping child, and if he is restless and uncomfortable, perhaps move him or shift his covering, so our own mortal sleep may be watched over. And of these things at death we may or may not know.

If there is a guardian consciousness, we err greatly in seeking to understand its nature by

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projecting the circumstances and conditions of this world into the beyond. The other world can scarcely be what we almost invariably try to conceive it, an extension of this; but rather this world is an extension of that. The realities here derive their cogency from something greater than we now appreciate. Certainly with all our petty idolatries, our abnegation of holier sentiments, our wavering hold upon ideas, we may be sure that what is sterling and genuine in this earthly experience gets its character and worth from some more universal source than what we call the world.

Impersonal immortality inevitably seems cold. Those elements of which alone the understanding can be sure, give little promise of warmth. In the presence of the deathless truth the heart covertly pictures a heaven of particular objects where it may again find what is most dear.

Then beauty is so commanding: little melodies that in some hour of unusual susceptibility bewitched and yet emancipated the heart, what has become of them when the tones are gone? Little incidents link our days together by some secret bond. On a winter's day a door swinging, by chance, complains in just the tone of a catbird. Even the suggestion of that swamp-note recalls warm bushes, woody fragrance, and little rustling evidences of life. It is the immortal voice of Nature. Beauty lives on and on, and rides like a fairy queen on all these transient vehicles. Yet

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within the natural sounds is a cry. Rifts in nature let through the glimpse of a foreign sphere. The soul yearns toward the beyond. The world shrinks before this instinct. All we know is not enough. Ah, if we could be ætherized by the ozone of the summer night! If we could die thus, and dying pass off into that mysterious direction toward which the wild sympathy of nature draws, how rich a fulfilment were death.

But we are always at the mercy of instincts which may refer to future episodes in our life here. All premonition is bound by this condition; and as a personal problem we do not know whether the unknown term in the equation of life is reached by an evolution of the known terms, or whether the alien spirit is to be wooed and won in a newness hidden from us by the veil of death.

Love is so tenacious of evanescent particulars. In the brilliant hall where near a thousand men and women are dancing, will the lover find the girl whose eyes, near him but some hours since, reflected the firelight? Here in the larger sphere, the grander unity, each particular personality seems lost, swallowed in the maze and whirl. Yet all the occasion can offer him of real life is that he should see one face: the tide of life too full for questioning when she is near.

The problem for the personal consciousness, for that thing we call self, has no conclusion. Such considerations as are pertinent teach only the dis-

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cipline of the wishes. If we must have a solution for the individual, it is that he should entrust himself to the great power known as Love. The self is but a wandering spark. Particulars are constantly winnowed away. Progress may come through the sleep of all that may be called self, and all our life be the evolution of universal tendencies, riding upon a series of shifting and renewing selves.

What if this thought is all the immortality you have! Only as you have sent this thought into the ages, perhaps, shall your life continue. Does it so much matter, if you truly love? We are preparing our immortality by our words and deeds, here and now. We abandon self gradually by our sympathy and understanding; transfer our individuality to others by the fusing devotion of the heart.

Throwing self outward awakens the everlasting life within. The swallows that we love are not the symbol and metaphor of thought but our thought itself. We share one life. The criminals and outcasts are ourselves, and by this they are recognized and understood and finally metamorphosed. There is no altogether foreign soul, nor can there be such, in the universe.

There may at last come a time when we feel the unity of self with what is universal, and say, not 'Where did I come from? Where shall I go?' but, 'How came I here? Why am I not at home? How came I to be divided into fragments, and

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harassed and embarrassed with strange particulars?' This deeper understanding, this deeper sympathy would still the insistent murmur that immortality without love were nothing, mortality with love were all. The universal spirit is not heartless. It is the author of heat. It has thrown the ideas out to conquer the cold. They are not cold themselves.

Immortality is the continuance of life, not over a particular span of time, but as something which is perpetually renewing itself as a permanent force, or an inexhaustible fountain. With death we have nothing to do. For the conscious self death is always in the future, and as the future is imaginary, so also is death.

The aspirations which even in their inception enrich our lives, begetting visions of happiness, are included in one illimitable present moment; one present moment which also contains, in its copious actuality, all of those elements of the past which we have loved. Our habit of translating change by reference to our linear perceptions obscures the truth that the present moment is one divine, transcendent Unity. Change is simply the metre of our efforts to reach out into it, and grasp its abundant truth.

Success may come by hardship, by genuine effort, by sacrifice. Nature responds with unexpected transformations. Our sterile activities bud with roses, the murky doubts are flooded with an incalculable sunrise. The most potent

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magic is in the faces we love. Hope comes not from exploring into that which is alien, but by a return nearer home. The act of giving brings us hither. Every flush of beauty is a test, every danger an opportunity.

The soul needs no assurances in the beyond, needs no justification of its existence. It is careless of immortality, it is too happy to care. For the soul is in its nature noble and sacrificial, it exists to be spent. "He that loses his life for my sake shall find it." It is not that the soul goes through a pretense of death knowing that life is on the other side. The soul does not know. It knows only God, and the internal law of its nature, which is to give, give and always give. Were it not for human weakness, were the soul pure, it would work in the dark, unknown and unrecognized forever; or it would die an utter and absolute death, if by so doing it could give a permanent happiness to another which it loved.

If one is not prepared to enter an absolute sleep, to end, to cease to be; or if one is not prepared to forego all recognition, all praise, all fame, his soul is not pure. Therefore it is that mortality within us is purged by self-denial. To face death and dissolution is life. To seek the elimination of all death by cultivating one's comfort and security is itself a kind of death. Therefore it is that the soul knows no death.

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PART IV

CONCLUSION

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

LIFE is a play of light and shadow, following nameless and unpredictable sequences. We know little enough what our words mean. The truth when we think we have expressed it most nearly turns out to be but the outpouring of a mood. The mood is all. The day, the hour, the second's flash of vision rules, and when the passion has gone, life is idle like a ship becalmed at sea.

"Everything in the universe goes by indirection" — a fact which gradually teaches the writer a certain wariness of assertion. All words have a kick to them. A man criticises only that which is in his own nature. If I am selfish, I see selfishness. If I am impure, I see impurity; and so on. A man's true opinion faithfully represents himself. The strict analysis of the present day arises, of course, from a strictly analytic turn of mind in the race. A prurient and mechanical description of biology, of conduct, of the human brain, are the exact description of him who thus describes. His view of nature and account of it faithfully portray the man. So with our friends, we cannot see the mote in our brother's eye without there be a mote in our own. Our criticism of the world is the world's criticism of us. You tend to quarrel with your

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friend just to the extent of your own pride and selfishness, not to the extent of his. With a saint you will magnify all his faults to the proportion of your own. With a sinner you will tend to ignore or make light of his faults to the measure of your own innocence.

Thus experience is equivocal. We are praised for facing difficulties after they have ceased to be difficulties and we begin to take credit for our sloth. One never knows his own virtue. He who is conscious of his own merit loses it, and paradoxically we talk about those things which we do not possess. The man who has ideals in his heart talks materialism. And he who is a materialist at heart is usually talking ideals; but ideas shine in the materialistic symbolism; the materialist heart cannot make the talk of ideals ring true. Similarly the less a man thinks of himself, the more proof that the scope of his vision is wide; the more he thinks of self, the smaller the scope of what he sees outside himself; for each one of us is infinitesimally small in the eye of the universe.

If one is asked what ethical conclusion, what practical result his beliefs or speculations as to the foundation of belief lead to, this equivocal aspect of life gives him pause. The cynicisms and insincerities of society have some justification, and the man who attempts to outline his ethics finds himself like some wayfarer caught in a quagmire lifting one foot out only by sinking the other deeper in.

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Our ethical beliefs are immersed in historical particulars. As every story needs its own setting, so every problem has its individual peculiarities. We set our swirling hieroglyphics upon the stream of life. Only a little path in the current bears our imprint. The response we make to a few calls or challenges stamps us for what we are. From what we do the principles which govern us are interpreted.

The cycle in our beliefs which is indicated by Illusion, Disillusion, and Reillusion, is followed in our experience by another which might be designated as Generation, Degeneration, and Regeneration. We come out of the intellectual crisis which renewed within us the spirit of belief, endowed with a philosophy of life. Upon this we found a code of morals. We believe we know how to meet the world, but we soon find that the perception of truth does not guarantee obedience to truth. The whole stuff of our belief so far has been a matter of expression. To live according to our aspirations has been a dream, not a practice. Our ideals being thus far only intellectual have but a single dimension, needing performance to add a second, and discipline for a third. But as we enter upon this new cycle we find our problems are not a question of words but of experience. They must be lived to be understood. Words cannot serve us further. Then too the stream of life is so complex and tumultuous that the cycle or rhythm is broken into a hundred billows, cross-

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currents, and eddies. These are accentuated by our novel-reading and our study of history, as well as by contact with maturer persons. The course of one's own development is lost among one's sympathies. Hence the attempt to follow the historical trend of the cycle of experience seems profitless. And though the influence of this cycle upon the nature of our beliefs is far more profound than is our intellectual history taken by itself, nevertheless, unlike the process of reillusion which leads us to greater and greater expressiveness, the process of regeneration leads to greater and greater reticence because it is a recognition of realities which become progressively more and more difficult to describe.

A few reflections must suffice to intimate the new meaning which experience brings to belief.

Our own code of morals arises from our metaphysics. Those propositions which we find fundamentally to be so, form an absolute basis for our rules of conduct stern and inexorable. Consciousness is primary and governs its objects. Consciousness gives to objects all the character which they have. In other words nature is parallel to our minds because nature is such as we think it. Every part of consciousness is in some measure sacred because our attitude of mind takes effect instantaneously in the world around us. We are creating at all hours, that is, at all hours when we make any choice or decision. Each one of these

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decisions has the same potency, the same validity as geologic law. Hence the thirst for improvement, or the tendency to seek some condition better than our present condition, acting at all times as a loadstone for consciousness, is real and trustworthy.

Ethically mankind seems to have advanced by a series of stepping-stones. These are the rules or standards which he has learned to adopt. Thus the Ten Commandments express a standard or way of life which lies in the line or direction of progress. So also in all branches of social activity the need of a code leads to the establishment of rules of conduct. These are simply the *modus vivendi* of the practical ideal.

The expression *idealism* has become weakened by the preposterous uses to which it has been put. The world is full of ideal-mongers who wish to claim the full rights of ideas for whatever nostrum or palliative their fancy may have suggested. Better than the hazy dreams and theories in which we too often clothe our thirst for pleasure, the clear outlines of science portray ideas. Each hypothesis, or formula, astronomical, chemical, physical, biological, in its place and for its use, carries the stamp of truth. The ideas are an absolute test as to each group of facts because basically the facts themselves are ideas, but the physical world must be studied for the particular facts with which any particular intellect must deal. A man cannot seek into his mind regardless of the

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outside world without the danger of losing all relation between those ideas which he uses, and those facts among which he is historically thrown. Such a course is contrary to the mandates of the ideas themselves. The faithful investigation of the external world is unequivocally prescribed by the human mind. But the intellect must exercise great caution in judging those outlines which appear dim; for all the facts which we cannot see or do not notice we shall be tempted to call visionary. They may be the decisive feature of the landscape yet we shall at times doubt their reality. But it is by a perpetual idealization of our problems that we gain the surest guidance for true progress.

It is part of the miracle of life that the principles which govern it are so simple. In truth, all principles come from one root, namely, the love of right. Religion itself is no more than this. Validity of choice, or the actuality of the will, is axiomatic. The will finds in life the free opportunity to choose between a better and a worse alternative. The choice of the better promotes happiness, the choice of the worse promotes unhappiness. Fundamentally there is but one ethics, one philosophy of conduct, namely, to prefer always and everywhere the better over the worse.

The will works by effort. When the heart chooses right without effort, it has come into harmony with the universal spirit because of the momentum of its past decisions, decisions where

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effort was necessary to the choice of the right alternative. Yet even the freedom of choice itself owes half its parentage to necessity. The thirst for the better is tyrannical once it has been felt. There is no escape from its persistence. Having known a better life than the one we are now living, we cannot contentedly pursue our present course further, unless it furnishes us the power to evolve into that better condition which we have known or seen.

Now whatever a man most wants is defended from his desire by an insulation of difficulty. This must always be so initially. The higher good must be more difficult of attainment than the lower good — that is to say, more good is guarded by more difficulty because human nature cannot help prizing more highly that over which it has expended effort than that over which it has not; and the measure of the effort, or some equivalent of effort, is the measure of the value.

It might seem from this that if the most good is the most difficult, we should find a dilemma in that a life of straight difficulty would be a life of pure unhappiness. But this appearance is characteristic of difficulty; and it is this very fact which gives so deep a value to sacrifice. For sacrifice is after all only an appearance. If your sacrifice be genuine you cannot escape its reward. Similarly difficulty cannot remain perpetual in the face of effort. In the light of reason sacrifice is impossible in its literal sense; for it is the giving-

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up of the obvious for the underlying advantage. It is lopping off inferior branches. True sacrifice is discipline of the will, the abandonment of cherished wishes which do not strengthen us. But before the act one cannot know, at least cannot appreciate its reward. It is an act of utter courage, a complete unselfishness.

Difficulty is an objective test. We do not seek it. We seek a palpable good, and pursue it, whether or not the way be difficult. If we blindly pursue difficulties for their own sake, thirsting for some reward, like enough our pains will prove barren. Yet normally in the honest pursuit of duty and human benefit, the overcoming difficulty proves in itself and for its own sake a cause of happiness. Progress built upon pain is ultimately founded upon a basis of joy. Difficulty is but a partial and negative test of what is good, and it is against the law of the spirit to remember a difficulty once it is past.

Nothing can exempt us from the duty of choosing as our own the highest ideal we have known. Nothing can exempt us from the duty of attempting to realize that ideal in life. Difficult that realization must be; but the ideal itself is something positive which in the end knows nothing of difficulty. If difficulty were the only test life would be simple, morality would be cold, narrow, and severe; but that which leads us forward is not thus. The positive elements of life are beautiful, involving many forms of excellence.

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Thus, when we come to seek the better way of life, and in so doing reflect upon our standard of conduct, we are struck with the superiority of the unconscious virtues. If we could only be guided unconsciously by right instincts! Spontaneous activity is so much lovelier than conscious effort. Spontaneity is joyous and regal. Thus at times we become identified with our surroundings, and follow luminous methods of behavior which merge personal satisfactions into social and sometimes wholly unselfish benefits. At times also we seem to be swept along by inevitable meliorations. Things grow better and better with an impetus out of all proportion to the apparent energy involved. It is the fruitage of old endeavors long forgotten. If the spirit floats us along, independent action of the will mars all. But when the golden tide is ebbing, it then becomes our duty to strive for the light. The intellect must explore the causes of success, and the heart search itself in meekness. The foster nurse of effort is humility. Without conscious struggle spiritual impulses will not come, and spontaneity is a heavenly gift, not easily to be won.

The lilt and song of life break into all formalism. The self is in perpetual transference from one thing to another. The soul is always migrating, always giving itself to something apparently other than itself. It is careless of its form of life, careless of the vehicle it uses, so only that while in use the vehicle is sweet and clean. The soul

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feeds on vision and must not be obstructed by appetites, humors, and tempers. It is careful of its own purity, its own constancy, careless of the means it uses, and thus the body is subject to any call which the generosity of the soul may make. Hence comes the seeming paradox that though principles are subordinate to life a man must die for principles. The principle is above the individual, not above the larger sympathy and happiness for which his individual life is spent.

But the frail human will at first finds the practice of ethics quite beyond its undeveloped powers. A short acquaintance with experience intimates that there is much to learn from life besides rules of conduct. Our discipline by no means conforms to our wishes or expectations. Facts not only have dimensions, but mass. When they begin to move, or when we begin to move among them, we learn our relative strength or impotence.

In attempting to put ideals in practice, the individual meets these difficulties: —

(1) The periodicity of his own temper and condition running in apparently fatal courses upsets his self-confidence and distorts his view of right and wrong. Once in so many days the man grows a crop of good resolutions. These have a life history of a limited number of hours, ten, twenty, a hundred, quite independently of any carefully reasoned wishes he may entertain, and then at the

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appropriate time the resolutions disappear, leaving perhaps some trifling fruitage; but little more. With due regularity the efforts slump, and he becomes the victim of a shocking indifference. The habits and moods run in this tidal manner. The temptations surge up about so often; yet the weather changes of the heart and mind are as whimsical and capricious as the meteorology of the temperate zone, seeming to show little relation to principles and ideals.

But there are greater changes not readily observed at first, changes which run over many months or years, a sort of organic growth and decomposition. A downward tendency takes possession of the individual, a demon seems to impersonate his ideals, in order to mock him.

> "O misery on't! the wise gods seal our eyes.
> In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
> Adore our errors, laugh at us while we strut
> To our confusion."

There are many symptoms of the downward course. More and more frequently we submit to the deadly experience of knowing an act is wrong and yet doing it. We feel within us the option of choice between right and wrong and deliberately choose wrong. If we stop to think, the very fact that this can be so mocks our reason. When this experience happens often we become aware of a more permanent indifference creeping over the heart, like the advance of the glacial cap from

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the pole. We see also that races and nations decay; and from the influence of that process the individual cannot escape. He cannot arrest the laws of decomposition. There seems no escape from that conclusion which reason has already faced, conquered, and abandoned, namely, that our apparent freedom of choice is an illusion, and that the downward trend of our apparent decisions is utterly inevitable.

(2) A second difficulty is that dynamic forces in the world, whether they be right or wrong, have a strength out of all proportion to our estimate of that strength before we have come in direct contact with them. The idealist to his dismay becomes magnetized by the world, dances as it dances, sins as it sins. When he feels the terrific pressure of social events his tongue begins of itself to tell lies. He did not know before that he was a coward. He has no thought of abandoning his principles, but there he is, a puny fate-ridden fact, a bit of iron filing surrounded by powerful electric currents. Of what consequence can his principles be?

Meanwhile fierce thirsts for pleasure assail the soul. Emotions which have been repressed because inappropriate to the occasion on which they arose, seek any and every outlet. With the faith in personal initiative and spiritual law shaken, the dams begin to crumble, and such personal power as we have already stored begins to ebb away. The devil has ever outwitted human beings. The

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self-indulgences quickly seize each upon some virtue; as the guests of a fancy-dress ball pick upon some costume, and thus skilfully adorned play out their parts with marvellous facility. Well for the boy if the habits of his bringing-up are wholesome, and thoroughly stamped in his nature. For no amount of instruction can save him now. Visions of the fairest ideal avail not. And with the bitterness of disappointment too often our mortality asserts itself so far that we conclude our own life to be wholly disparate from the life of goodness and beauty.

At his strongest, man is not entirely his own master; in certain relations, not at all. He is ever a fragment only of larger unities, where his influence counts for little or nothing. He cannot easily purge his native land of its corruptions. He cannot, except in rare instances, ward off national disasters. He and all that he loves most dearly are at the mercy of the burglar or the mob — of any group who choose to break certain simple rules to which civilized people habitually trust. The seeds of revolution lie within the state as the seeds of disease lie within the individual. Whatever the form of government, the vast commonwealths of civilization are tunnelled with decay.

The point of view of the members in a community tends to degenerate with the accumulation of wealth, of power, and of luxury. The will which fought its way through difficulties to the mastery of circumstances becomes wilful. The

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weaker beneficiaries of a strong man's success become envious. The intellect runs riot and allows its estimate of moral values to fall into confusion. The truth is held lightly, and the amenities themselves foster all manner of speciousness, as when Philip II of Spain was described in the period of the Inquisition as a prince "clement, benign, and debonair," or when our Secretary of State, addressing Germany in regard to the Lusitania, wrote on May 14, 1915, "Recalling the humane and enlightened attitude hitherto assumed by the Imperial German Government," etc. The tendency which makes toward the abasement of words, makes also toward the abasement of customs and manners. People begin to measure festivities by laughter and noise rather than by real enjoyment. Instead of achievement display is sought. Instead of the approval of conscience the approval of the newspapers. Instead of a strict adherence to facts, the scrutiny of opinions, the influence of names and reputations; until the community is reduced to a shadow of existence, fed upon artifice and sham, and the spectacle of a savagery which is real, and robber tactics put in practice by a fellow community arouses slumbering faculties, and men recognize with a sudden shock how much weakness has been harbored in complacency.

But the very dangers which startle us are disguised friends. The soul is as much at home in unstable conditions as in peace. The dissolution

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of bonds, the abrogation of conventions which loyal persons keep as a matter of fairness, leaves man free to build afresh. Emancipation is a direct challenge to power. When King George's government broke down in New England the people of Massachusetts proved their ability to maintain civil life without a government. When an honest man is free to use drastic methods honesty usually prevails. Corruptions are apt to work their own cure in time through the reversion of the sufferers to rugged first principles. In the day of crisis any institution may be challenged; and we may see one wholesome effect of crises in the revelation that most of our institutions are provisional, and much in need of change. The fearless citizen as he plunges into a turbulence wherein all standards are tested, pursues his ideal in foul weather as in fair, loyal to his own sphere and what is best within himself.

Thus a man looks beyond any code or principle which his intellect can formulate for guidance in life. He must rise by the force of a power within him, he must rise toward the communion of a spirit above him. As every boat in the bay catches the wind, therefrom deriving the power to move, so every religious sect is actuated by the spirit, nor is one more entitled to it than another. The same devotion, the same faith, the same reverence lives in all the great religions. Though the thought of this unity seems unreal as we abstract

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it from the ceremonial and pictured ritual in which it is variously enshrined, that unity still is there.

How foolishly we seek for special manifestations. When the processes of the world are recognized as lawful, the undisciplined heart begins to crave for something extra-lawful. Men wish their religion to do something for them which the natural laws as they conceive them cannot do. But in no sense is religion a lawbreaker. Nor can you have correctly interpreted your law, if it can be broken. The controversy between faith and reason is due to a weak estimate of both faith and reason. Reason is the language of faith. You never have faith in what your reason disapproves. Faith is the matrix of life as belief is the matrix of thought; and faith departs from reason only in so far as it acts as a sort of momentum which carries us across unreasoned abysses; but faith is always groping for a fresh hold upon reason. Health presupposes a condition of trust between the two as the heart and head are strong when they work together.

No one is without faith. It is only a question of what the faith of each man comprises.

> "When me he flies I am the wings,
> I am the doubter and the doubt."

The admission of the existence of God is of no great consequence. It is only a question of how many steps a man goes toward the unknown, before he is forced to admit the existence of that

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which most people call God. How personal this reality is, depends upon the individual character of the worshipper.

Intellectual difficulties ever beset the attempt to particularize God. That is because the attempt is vain; but these difficulties arise from and end with ourselves. So it is also with our worry over the enormous profusion of life which seems to us superfluous or distasteful. All life must have equal rights. We are all striving for a way of life which will work. The attempts of the rattlesnake and mosquito are parallel with our own, and because these and other features of our surroundings annoy us it is no reason to see a lack of benevolence in the universe or abandon or make light of our own attempts to live well. Our objection to these alien examples of the universal force is a peculiarity of ourselves.

Universal goodness is utterly impartial. The consciousness of this helps us in the discipline of prayer. We cannot pray to a universal spirit for particular benefits. We must earn particular benefits by particular efforts. There is no other way to get them. Only as we sink our peculiarities and find the universal elements of self can we receive religious help. Prayer is first a recognition and a discipline and then an inflowing of magnetism. The potency of an electric generator lies in nature. We can avail ourselves of it if we will. The act of prayer is an act of placing one's self so as to be magnetized by a deeper current, a

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current always available, always motive, always sure. By our faith we tap the universal stream.

But we have many subtle religious impulses we scarcely ever think to recognize as such. The nearness of nature, and the heart's response, the wind in the oak trees and the fragrance of the summer bushes, how utterly sincere and serene are these. He that sings because his heart is overflowing from the beauty of God's temple is unconscious that his song reflects that beauty. He is the true priest, the authentic minister of God. The original religious sanctuary of all the races is the great outdoors. The sunlight burns upon the altar. The vegetation is the vestment of God. The flowers give us incense. The waves in harmony with sky and cloud and shore give illustration of a perfect law, and these weather processes passing over and around us unite the individual immediately with transcendent things.

Yet man does not remove a stone out of nature by raising it into a temple. The cathedrals with their chimes, their stained-glass windows, their mass of sculpture, belong as truly to nature as the trees and flowers. They touch hidden sources of emotion which having known we would not be without. There is a place in the universal religion for all the shrines. The deeper personality recognizes the sanctuaries of all the races — Mosque, Parthenon, or Cathedral. The universe is our temple, the worship is our life; for a life which is not acceptable to God is no life at all.

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Real life is worship, and each man's deepest concern is his own conduct. There is no room for mechanistic conceptions in his personal problems. He is free; and for progress the original impulse must come from within himself. At the lowest ebb if one could only remember that this particular hour and minute is unprecedented, never had its like before, how great the opportunity of that realization. From the standpoint of ideas there is no such thing as a defective will. All weakness is due to mechanical obstructions from among which the soul must emerge. We recognize the lion impulse, monkey impulse, man impulse, made such by habit; and again, the "eye for an eye" impulse and the Christian impulse. All these live by the same right of creation, but none are final. Habit gradually creates a vessel apparently irrefragable. It thus seems like a miracle if the weak will becomes strong. A man must accomplish the apparently impossible to advance from the rut of evil habits; and yet he constantly does so advance. There comes a time when the old vessel is broken up, and life enlarges. The least effort of the dynamic will may start something new. Looking back on periods of stagnation we are sometimes struck with the nicety of balance between good and evil, perceiving too late how very slight a push would have set our affairs going in the right direction, and saved many hours of squandered life. But there is no expressible law which can explain in measurements of

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nervous energy this increase of power in an individual when he does right. We seldom know which little effort is the true one, which act of self-conquest has turned the tide of our affairs, or which choice among the maze of paths we trod led toward better things. We are subject to an imperceptible guidance, a mysterious intelligence as to our deserts; and it is good to be always striving, always under discipline. We never know beforehand the antecedents or instructions of the simplest messenger who comes to the door.

Though the original push must come from inside one's self, progress involves a readjustment to that which is outside of self. It is from among relationships with things external that the means of advance must be grasped. One is forced to experiment and learn. At last after many false tries a man finds that there is one thing which he has got to do. Other things were ephemeral, this is native to his abilities. Thus it comes about that the discouraging aspects of life, the degenerative process, the periods of wallowing and degradation are dispelled by the discovery of some need in the world which matches one's natural aptitudes, so that one finds himself to have a special use. And perhaps he may then find that all unhappiness, all his floundering was but a part of his development toward this one thing. Unpopularity, moroseness, lustfulness, drunkenness, whatever may have been his special form of difficulty has taught him the things he needed to know.

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The world responds to us in the measure of our love of men. It is thus our gauge. We adjust ourselves gradually with the help of its indications. The world is continually "knocking us into shape," nor can we escape its din and roar. Even the recluse finds the world batters against him in the measure of his unused capacities.

Yet the man has within himself a moral force which gives him sanction sometimes to stand alone. By that same law of indirection the relative appearance of the man and the world may vary with the shifting of the polarization of thought. Galileo called the Copernican theory of the earth's motion a "Mathematical *Capriccio.*" In Rome at that day it was not suitable to call it truth. But with the passing of centuries the same thought becomes orthodox. That selfishness which distresses one's friends may be due to maladjustment. It may have a quite definite cause in some occult injustice which the community does to the individual. The selfishness may express a state of electric tension destined to pull the world toward the man.

But the burden of proof is on the individual. It is not for him to condemn the world. His function is to keep to his own aim, and if the world ignores him, he must conclude not that the world is wrong, or his ideal false, but that his workmanship in expressing his ideal was poor.

Howsoever these things be, a man must strike out fearlessly on his own path. Success attends

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those who speak directly and hit hard. Facts are always deeper than the forms which describe them; and success is interpreted in varying terms. Its outward manifestations are relatively unimportant, and its highest test is the accomplishment wrought by inward fire.

A man's relationships are sacred; his work cannot be taken as something apart from these. It is in and through these that his duties and tasks get their pertinency. It is our human bonds which carry on their unseen filaments the original generative power of love. The love between man and woman is a profound revelation into the heart of life, but even this overwhelming influence does not escape from ethical necessities, nor do the offices of love begin and end with this one relationship.

Love is in every breast, uniting all mankind, single or married, in one common understanding, and as we grow, our sympathies extend into wider circles; and the craving for particular circumstances which we once felt absolutely essential to our well-being loses its poignancy. Nothing is so misunderstood as Platonic love. If we read Plato's poetry, it is the poetry of a mighty, all-inclusive passion. It is an allegorical assertion of the divinity of love. Were the poet to gratify his lust, he has no more gratified the imperative demand which haunted him than if he had drunk water to satisfy his longing for the sea. For some it is gratification enough to be near the beloved,

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for others to touch, for one to hear her speak, for another to hear her sing, and each gratification breeds yet another desire. But the poet can never be satisfied, for he knows too well how inaccessible is the beloved that he loves. All the beauty and knowledge that intellect can give him cannot suffice to bring the two together. He has seen the nature of the light which shines on all the incidents of life — a light accessible to all, but not to be grasped, not to be appropriated, not to be turned to a petty use.

The best in love is always pure. The path to the temple is steep, the guardians of its treasures are stern. There comes up the picture of a face seared by thirty years of pain, a lowering sky, raindrops driving among the pine trees, one of New England's sacred sanctuaries. A lonely man buries all that was left to him of life. In the retrospect is bitterness, in the future despair. This was one who loved, and suffered unrecognized for an ideal. Just an unknown incident in the life of truth. Oh, you who live in comfortable homes, and hear the laughter of children, enjoy the warmth of a circle of cheerful friends, and the performance of useful work, what do you know of sorrow, what do you know of life? Some kind angel guided you among the pitfalls. But you are surrounded by mourners and broken souls who know no such contentment as you have known. Faces which reflect the deep recesses of human nature sanctify our own more thoughtless lives.

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And there is he who will not break the marriage vow. Is he reading problem novels? Is he hankering after an easier, more selfish standard which might permit a wrench, a parting, and then a surfeit of stifling roses, shutting out a past where one must not look? Not so. He is a loyal, lonely soul who bears his full measure of pain. He is more man than a thousand pleasure-seekers who affront the name of love with their talk of affinities. A simple stern sacrifice makes him real. We are one stuff and substance throughout the community. The word and deed of one is the bread and meat of another, and no surgery can cut apart our relatedness. You whom the years are just revolving into the rose glow of love, you little realize in your purity what you owe to those who did not yield to great temptations, but maintained without recompense the unwritten laws of home.

The world being what it is, the form of our ethics is unessential, so long as we are loyal to what we mean to be, so long as we are in duty bound to the happiness of one another. We need not fear that the maintenance of a standard is going to work some injustice upon us. It is an evidence of progress that standards of conduct should be here, and that we should be committed to them. We fear to lose our freedom, but we need not fear. The happy life is not bought but given. We do not need extravagant pleasures, nor those effects and luxuries which are highly

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prized. Weedy impulses are good fertilizers if ploughed back by self-denial into the soil of self; and if we learn to cultivate those activities which mean growth the harvest will not disappoint us. As the heart quickens, the spirit of joy steals into common activities. Our interests attach themselves to simpler and ever simpler objects, and we feel more deference for all the manifestations of life. We are not so dazzled as once by glory and fame, and ignore or forget the scorn of society that we do not seek its prizes. It is enough to feel the heart of nature beating. The huckleberries in the wind-swept pasture have gained an ambrosial taste, and the hint of paradise floats upon the fragrance of the clethra blossoms.

But the soul thus finding a home in little things, building its shrine by the roadside, soon moves on. Our moments of peace are given for the reception of new visions, and these, however gently the hint at first is given, are each and all incentive to action. Human life embosomed in paradise at one pole, plunges into turmoil at the other. The struggle is not over, the problems are not solved.

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POSTSCRIPT

CHEERFULNESS is the seed-wheat of heaven. When cheerfulness is the ruling habit for all mankind how rich will be the present, how tranquil the passage of time. The truth is more beautiful than our wildest dream. Hope is always right and never wrong. A man blindly attaches his hope to particular things erring in particulars, but hope meant something else all along. Hope in its purity knows only celestial objects, leads only to them. It is to teach men that all philosophy and all experience but play the part of children soon outgrowing all the things they say. At any moment the fresh morning world may unveil the view of heaven, the sense of beauty quicken in the heart — all reasoning futile in the light of new vision. Poetry, always magical, its systems, forms and laws passing out to the infinite in every direction, embarks us upon further and yet further excursions toward the boundless truth.

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